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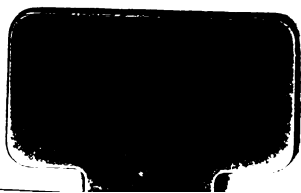
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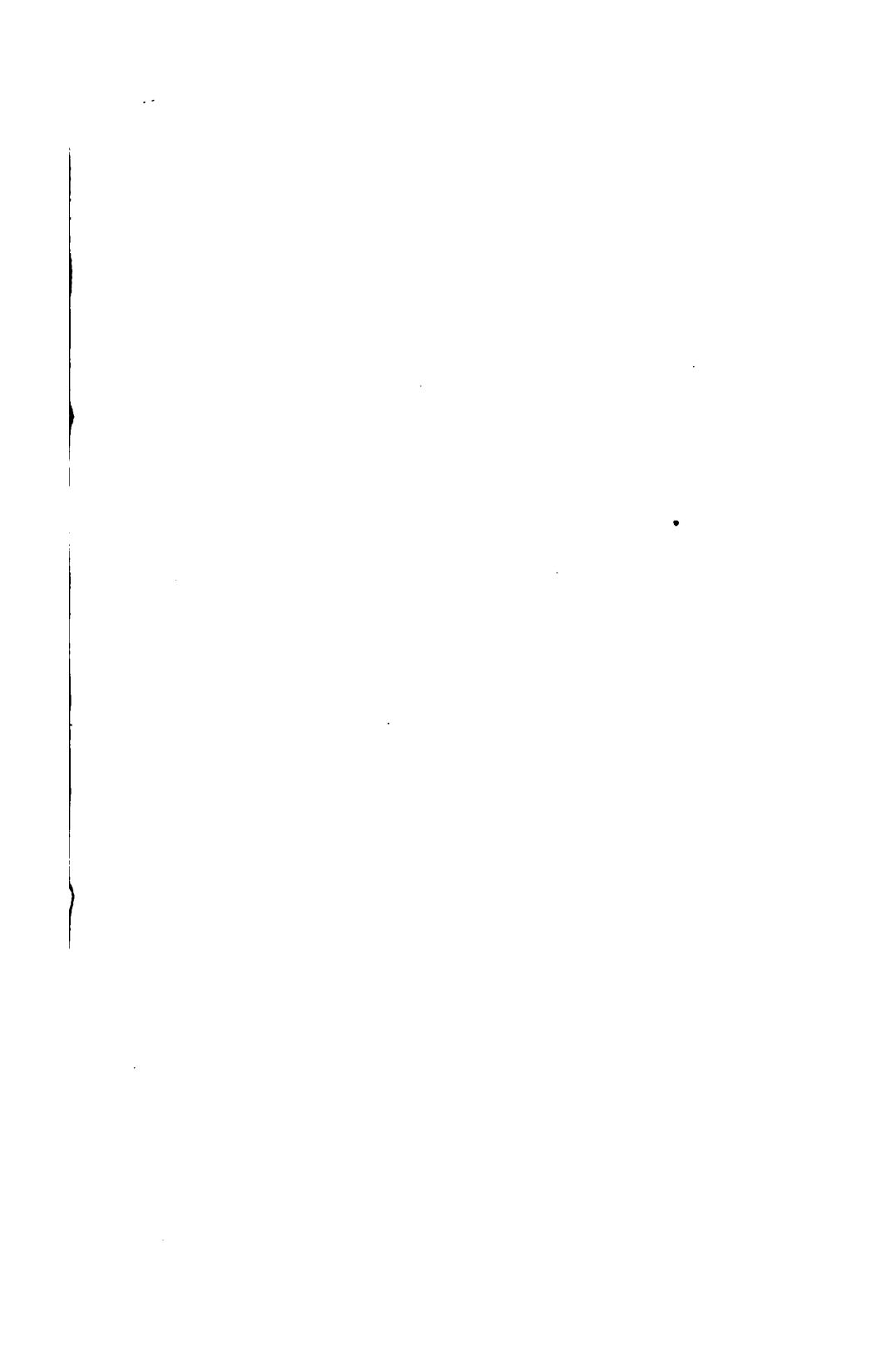
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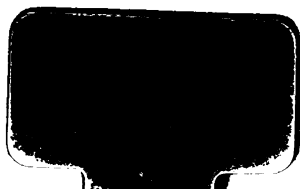
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HERBERT ANNESLIE

A Reminiscence

BY

FULWAR CRAVEN FOWLE

OF THE BENGAL CIVIL SERVICE.

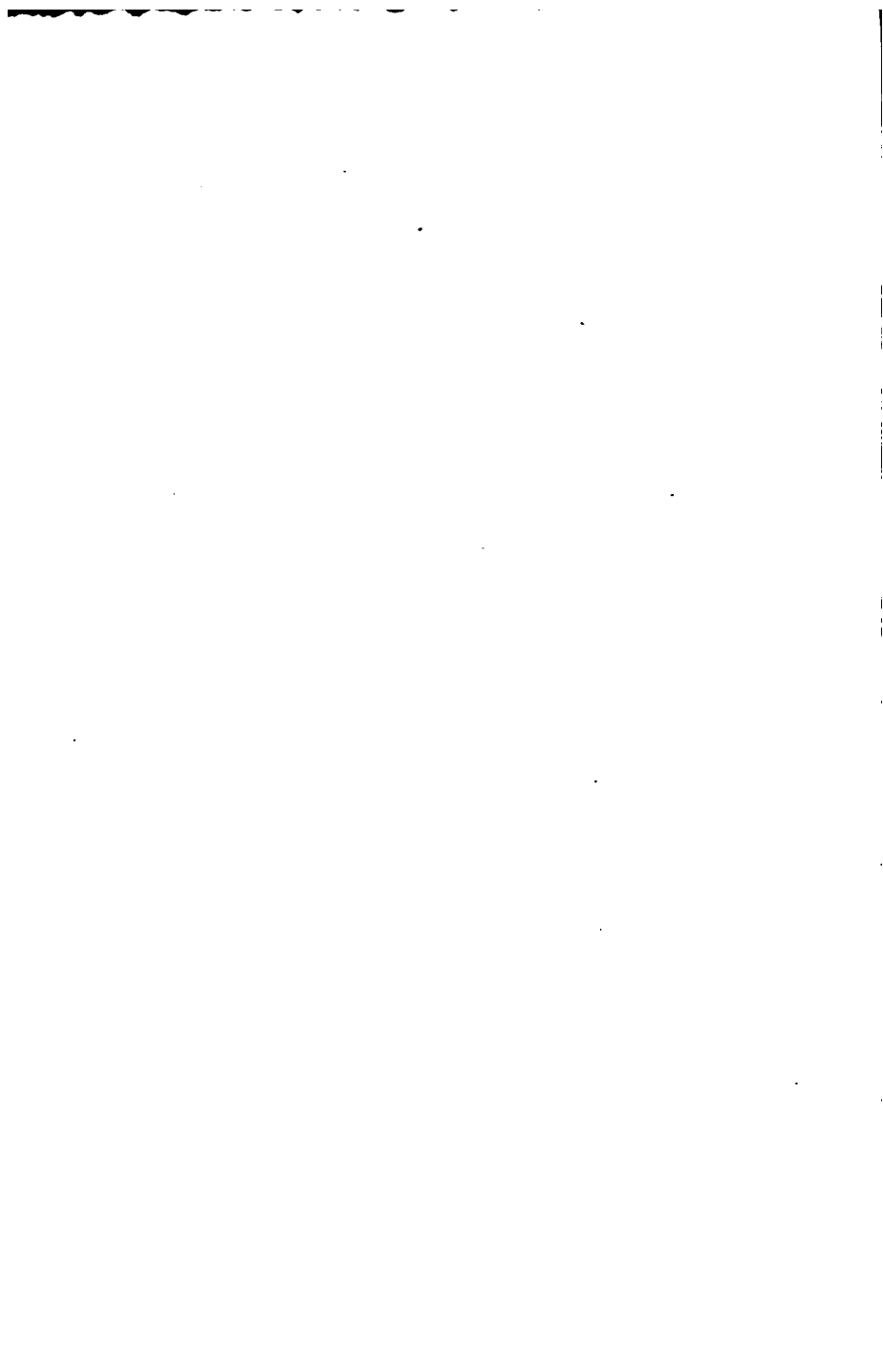


LONDON

SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.

1853.

249. v. 431.



TO
THOMAS ASSHETON SMITH, ESQ.

This Volume

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

IN EARNEST TOKEN

THAT NEITHER TIME NOR DISTANCE

HAS DIMMED THE MEMORY

OF HIS GREAT KINDNESS TO

THE AUTHOR.

HERBERT ANNESLIE.

CHAPTER I.

ERRATA.

Page 78, line 2 from bottom, *for snuffed read snuffed.*

— 80, line 4 from bottom, *for were read was.*

— 332, line 13 from top, *for lie read lay.*

plantations prettily grouped, and here and there single trees of stately growth—the oak, the beech, and the horse-chestnut, beneath whose sheltering branches the flocks and the herds love to lie. Down in the grassy vale beyond, a noble river, celebrated for the size and excellence of its trout, winds along; now lost, now seen again, laughing and glistening in the sunbeams, or louring with that dark and troubled surface, which in the charming months of an English summer invites the angler to his sport. Further in the distance some of the arches of the bridge are visible; and just beyond, distant about a mile from the Lodge, is the pretty and retired village of Beechwood, with the spire of

1875

1876

HERBERT ANNESLIE.

CHAPTER I.

THE lovely county of Devon, diversified as it is with all the peculiarities of English landscape scenery, with its lofty hills and luxuriant vales on one side, and its stupendous cliffs and eternal ocean on the other, has not within its borders a sweeter spot than Beechwood Lodge, where I was born, in January, 1792.

The house, a glorious old edifice, stands on the declivity of a gentle eminence, and looks toward the south. Behind, and on considerably higher ground, is a magnificent wood. In front is a beautiful landscape, with clumps and plantations prettily grouped, and here and there single trees of stately growth—the oak, the beech, and the horse-chestnut, beneath whose sheltering branches the flocks and the herds love to lie. Down in the grassy vale beyond, a noble river, celebrated for the size and excellence of its trout, winds along; now lost, now seen again, laughing and glistening in the sunbeams, or louring with that dark and troubled surface, which in the charming months of an English summer invites the angler to his sport. Further in the distance some of the arches of the bridge are visible; and just beyond, distant about a mile from the Lodge, is the pretty and retired village of Beechwood, with the spire of

its church rising aloft above the surrounding trees, and forming the most striking and interesting object of all this lovely scene.

On succeeding to this property my father made it his residence, preferring a quiet country life, with field sports, to the bustle and excitement of a London season, and the political gossip of a fashionable club.

Here, then, I was born. My sister Jane succeeded me when I was about thirteen months old. My two brothers, Alfred and Charles, followed several years after.

I have said that my father was attached to the amusements of the field, but he had never exclusively devoted himself to them. He had always been a reading man; and as years advanced, literary pursuits gained the ascendancy, until he ceased to be a sportsman altogether. He was of a most kind, generous, and obliging disposition, and if he ever refused a request to any one, it was either that what was asked was unreasonable, or that it was not in his power to grant it. Whoever was a witness of the annual dinner to his tenantry, required no further proof of the esteem and regard in which he was held.

He had one fault—and who has not many?—which I must mention, because a single instance of it was the primary cause of so many of the principal occurrences of my little history. He was at times exceedingly hasty and irritable. But what was said by him in the heat of the moment, was the next moment forgiven and forgotten by all excepting himself. I have known one angry expression give him pain and contrition for days. Once, I remember, he was speaking loud and angrily, when seeing my dear mother in tears, I ran up to her, and saying, “Don’t cry, dear mamma,” hid my face in her lap, and cried too. My father imme-

diately caught me up in his arms and kissed me. A tear rolled down his cheek, and the next moment he and my mother were locked in each other's embrace.

To know the latter was to admire and love her. She possessed the sweetest disposition, combined with the truest piety. At home she was the delight of us all; and when her more immediate duties had been discharged, she might be seen entering, when occasion needed, the meanest cottage, inquiring into the condition of the inmates, or administering comfort by the bed of sickness. To her I am indebted for my first instruction in those religious principles which have enabled me to see the hand of God in every event—have held me back from evil under powerful temptations, and supported me under those trials, difficulties, and disappointments which have yet to be detailed.

So great was the indulgence of both my parents towards me, that the common observation was—"That will be a spoiled child." One of my aunts saying, in my presence, "That boy, mark my words, will be a curse to his father through life," it made me so sad, that I went up stairs to my room, and falling down on my knees, offered up an infant's prayer that God would order it otherwise.

A person whom I continually saw as a guest at the Lodge, was Mr. Waldy. He and my father had been great friends at college, and although their intimacy had been for a time suspended, in consequence of their different walks in life, it was renewed at a later period, with the same mutual regard and esteem as before; and hearing, on the occasion of one of his visits, that there was a small freehold in the parish for sale, consisting of a cottage and garden with a paddock of a few acres, Mr. Waldy purchased it, and from that time resided at Beechwood. There was something

painfully interesting about him. He had a fine person, handsome and intelligent features, and strikingly gentlemanly manners. He was, I have heard my father say, one of the most distinguished scholars of his time at Oxford, and had subsequently stored his mind with much and varied information; but there was a melancholy pervading it all, which, whilst it excited your sympathy and commiseration for the sufferer, convinced you that the wound from which the life-blood was flowing away was too deep and too delicate for your probing.

I never remember to have seen him at the dinner-table excepting when my father and mother were alone. All advances made to him by families or individuals in the neighbourhood he courteously but firmly declined. To the poor, however, he was always accessible, and suffering of whatever kind was a sure passport to his benevolence. He was constant in his attendance on all the services of the church, and was, I am persuaded, a man of genuine religion.

When I was barely nine years of age, my classical education commenced with the Eton Latin grammar, and Mr. Waldy offering to become my preceptor, I went to him for a few hours three times a week. But although he always treated me with the greatest kindness, I could never wholly divest myself of the awe with which the first sight of him inspired me. On the other three days of the week, I and my sister were instructed by my mother, who, never angry, never out of humour, had the happy talent of making learning a pleasure, and imparting interest to tasks ordinarily irksome enough.

I was in my fourteenth year, when one morning the papers brought intelligence of an event, at that time the most interesting and important, perhaps, within the memory

of man—the battle of Trafalgar. Glorious was the triumph of British skill and valour over the combined fleets of France and Spain; dearly was the victory purchased by the death of the immortal Nelson. I was not yet of an age duly to appreciate either the joy or the sorrow, and ran away to communicate the news to John and the stable-boys in the saddle-room.

At luncheon I was informed that one of the letters which had arrived by that day's post was from Mrs. Ridgeway, a married sister of my father, inviting us all to pass a fortnight at Elston, which was about five-and-thirty or forty miles from Beechwood, and that it was determined we should go the following week.

Accordingly we went. The latter part of our journey lay through a dreary country. The roads were execrable; and evening was rapidly drawing on, when the postboy stopped his horses at a wretched-looking hovel by the side of the road, promising good accommodation for man and beast. A broken signboard over the door still retained a nose and half a mouth, which once had claimed kindred with the chin of Oliver Cromwell. After knocking for some time long and loud in vain, the figure of a boy, bare-legged and but half-clothed, appeared at the door adjoining the house, stupidly staring with his mouth wide open, his feet close together, and his knees so far asunder, that a small pig, watching his opportunity, rushed out between them, and ran grunting into a pond just by.

Whilst the horses were snuffing and snorting at some fusty hay, and water which the ducks had somewhat discoloured, an old gipsy woman came up to the door of the carriage, begging permission to tell the fortunes of the little dears; but my father, who had a great dread of anything

superstitious being instilled into young minds, peremptorily forbade her. Upon which she broke out into a violent rage, and holding up her clenched fist in a menacing manner as the carriage drove away, uttered a curse too horrid to be repeated, and in tones which haunted my imagination for days after.

CHAPTER II.

DURING our visit at Elston an incident occurred, which gave a colour to all my after life.

One of my childish faults was extreme carelessness. It was wonderful what facility I had for losing things. Any present, and I was continually receiving many from different friends, was no sooner in my possession than it vanished, especially riding-whips and pocket-knives.

One day, whilst at my aunt's, I was standing by my mother's toilet-table, and, seeing one of her rings, took it up and put it on my finger. Thinking it looked very grand, I teased her until she consented to my wearing it for a few days. On the following morning I accompanied my father and my uncle some few miles on horseback, and on my return home, to my intense consternation, the ring was gone. What to do I knew not. One thing I knew—that my father would be exceedingly angry, and I durst not tell him; so, running to my dear mother, I related to her what had happened. She did not scold me, for that she never did, but I saw that she was greatly distressed, and I wept. Just at this moment my father entered the room, and inquired what was the matter. My mother, who could not bear anything like concealment or prevarication, reluctantly told him the truth.

As I had foreseen, he was extremely angry, and asked me how I had lost it. I answered that I thought it must have fallen off my finger at a place some six or seven miles from the house, where I remembered to have taken off my gloves to button my coat. My father then, without saying another word, left the room, and a few minutes afterwards summoned me to the breakfast-parlour, where he was sitting alone. When I entered he was reading, and it was some time before he raised his eyes; at last, looking sternly upon me, he said, "Herbert, your carelessness is beyond anything I have ever heard of, and if I cannot break you of it, I will try what a public school will do. But now to this ring; I desire that you will immediately set out on foot—don't take your pony, sir—to the place where you imagine that you lost it, and beware how you return without it."

He then resumed his book; and I rushed out of the room, and out of the house, avoiding every one I saw. It was still early in the afternoon, and in an hour's time I was far on my way. It was the same lonely way by which we had come from the Cromwell's Head, with the old gipsy's maledictions sounding in my ears. For about the first six miles I met no one, but as I entered a part of the road where a thick wood lined it on either side, I began to feel uneasy, and, increasing my pace, soon arrived at the place where I hoped to find the ring. I hunted about for it for a long time, and at last, to my great joy, I saw it sparkling on the ground. This gave me new strength, and with a light heart I set off running home. I had not gone many paces back on the road through the wood, before I saw a man, apparently of the gipsy tribe, coming towards me. My first thought was to bolt into the wood, but he called out to me in so loud and harsh a voice, that I stood still till he approached. He asked me how I

came there, and who I was? He next searched me, and, discovering the ring, put it into his pocket, and bade me follow him. I entreated him to let me go, and promised him a large sum of money if he would take me home; but in vain. I next threatened him with punishment, if he prevented my returning to my friends; but at this he only gave a horrid grin, and, seizing hold of my hand, led me by an intricate path some way into the wood, when, to my still greater consternation, I beheld at a distance before me a camp of gipsies. I then renewed my entreaties with redoubled earnestness, and told him my father would give him ever so much money if he would accompany me back; but to no purpose. We soon came near to the camp. They had lit a large fire, and appeared to be engaged in cooking. On arriving within a hundred yards, the gipsy left me, with the injunction not to stir, at the peril of my life. Notwithstanding this threat, my first thought was to rush away deeper into the wood, but then I recollected that if they should catch me again, which they certainly would do, I might expect worse treatment in consequence; and besides, what object could they have, beyond detaining me so long as to take precautions against a pursuit. So there I stood, anxiously watching their movements at the camp, doubting and fearing what was next to happen.

The fellow who had brought me there was a short, thick man, with very broad shoulders, a rather flat nose, a peculiar squint of the left eye, and marked with the smallpox. As he reached the group, I saw him take one aside, and point towards me, and I could plainly distinguish an old woman. The latter then came towards me, and, as she approached, I recognised her as the very same whom I had seen at the public-house, and who had uttered that dreadful imprecation.

All the nursery tales of horror I had ever heard crowded to my recollection, and overwhelmed me with alarm. The hag was bent by age, but must have been a tall woman in her youth. Her countenance was sharp, with very small features, and her sunken eyes, with grey, bushy eyebrows, gave her an ill-omened expression, fit for the mother of Caliban,

"The foul witch Sycorax, who, with age and envy,
Was grown into a hoop."

A grin added still more to her ghastly appearance, as, with a fiendish laugh, she exclaimed, "Aha! aha! What, come already! I knew I should see thee, sooner or later. Ha! ha! little master mustn't have his fortune told, for fear some harm should come of it. I wonder what that old father of thine would give now, to know something about his darling. They great folk shouldn't spurn away the poor from their doors; there's no good comes o' that. The auld saying is always sure, though not always soon of proving,—

'As the ox to his stall,
So the proud to their fall.'

It was in vain that I renewed all kinds of entreaties with this odious old woman; nothing made any impression upon her. I promised her money in my father's name.

"Speak not to me of your auld father, he that could turn away a grey head the like o' mine with abusive words, when the frost and the cauld were biting my very limbs off."

Knowing resistance and remonstrance to be alike hopeless, I thought that by remaining quiet I might experience better treatment; and the old woman, rudely grasping my arm with her dark skinny hand, hurried me along with her to the camp.

The gipsies, as every one knows, are a race distinct from all the world besides, to be found in almost every quarter of

the habitable globe, but especially in European countries, where they travel about, much as they please, with baggage, and bedding, and culinary utensils enough to furnish their tents. The higher grades of these nomad tribes have a moral and religious code peculiar to themselves, which, whatever else may be the enactments or character of it, prohibits, and effectually restrains them from the commission of any acts of thieving or dishonesty. Generally speaking, however, the gipsies are the most impudent, and the most crafty of rogues. But although known to be guilty of innumerable acts of plunder and pilfery, they are seldom brought to justice, unless it be for some glaring outrage of the law, such as horse or sheep stealing. There is a protective kind of awe attached to their race, which makes others loth to interfere with them. And it is considered the best policy to induce them to leave your own lands, to keep a watch over your own sheepfolds and henroosts, and to connive at their depredations on your neighbour.

Their prerogative of telling fortunes serves also as a further security to them, from a superstitious dread, more extensively prevailing than some might imagine, of the evil consequences of their malediction. In days gone by, their cabalistic art was a source of ample funds levied upon all ranks; and even in later times, curiosity, with a certain feeling besides, not easy to be defined, has, in some measure, supplied the place of grosser superstition. But we are digressing.

When I arrived at the camp, I was told to sit down apart from the rest, who were busily engaged at their meal, during which I had leisure to observe my new acquaintances; for fear and fatigue had taken away all appetite for the hard crust and cold potato given me by the old woman. A couple of tents were pitched, and altogether there did not appear

any lack of comfort in a rude form, and the blazing fire gave the whole a degree of cheerfulness.

In addition to the two already mentioned, was a man, apparently of about five-and-twenty, with an expression not altogether unpleasing; long black hair hanging down to the shoulders, an aquiline nose, and dark eyes. His ill-formed mouth, however, took away all pretensions to a handsome face. Next to him, and exactly fronting me, sat a young girl of about fifteen, with one of the sweetest countenances I had ever beheld. The regularity of her features was striking in the extreme; her hair was jet black, and falling gracefully over her neck; whilst her fine dark eyes, with their long eyelashes, had that peculiarly soft expression, in which resides the secret of female fascination. Her dress was clean and neat. She was evidently not of the same caste with those around her, and I thought I could discern something of care and sorrow in that beautiful face. I wondered how she came there.

Observing that I did not eat what had been given me, she came towards me, and offered me a portion of her own mess, which was a piece of broiled mutton; at the same time saying to me in a low voice, "Keep close to me whilst you are here."

"What are ye doing there?" screamed the old woman; "ye must be burning your fingers wi' other folks' matters, must ye, ye hussy! And how d'ye think we are to go on feeding yourself, an idle interloper that ye are, doing nothing for your own keep? There's that fellow Tom, too, that aint brought home a thing the size of my eye the last week, a lazy loon that he is."

"Why, you know, mother," replied Tom, "there's such a sharp look-out for us, that we must be quiet for a few days."

"And for why?" answered the old beldam, in a still louder voice. "It's all because thee mad'st such a mess of that last job twenty miles back, that got up the whole country agin us; and, like enough, the taint's in the wind here. I would that—" I spare the reader and myself the close of this sentence.

"Come, mother," replied Tom, in a more soothing tone, "let's have no more jaw."

"What's the row now, ye auld limb of Satan?" said the other man, who had been absent for a short time, and now returned; "ye be for fighting agin, eh! I thought ye had had enough of that fun. But we shall soon come up with the others, and then your locks will be shorn; I suppose ye think now to make the most of your time. And, I trow, we ought to be on the move; for I spied a gentleman's servant, with two horses, not far from here, when I was up in a tall tree near the outside of the wood a few minutes ago, casting a glance over the country."

"Haud your tongue," said the old woman, seemingly rather put out by this news; "thy voice will one day bring thee to the gallows."

"It can bring thee there, whenever I please," retorted the other.

The hag then came, stripped me of my own clothes, and put on me some filthy rags.

"Oh! my dear father," I mentally said; for I thought most of him at that moment—yes, even more than of my sorrowing and beloved mother.

As old Mag, for so I had heard her called, was employed in changing my dress, I observed the young girl go up to the man they called Tom, and say a few words to him, which I could not hear. The latter then turned and left the tent. I

strongly suspected that she had been using her influence with him in my behalf. And this, together with a servant and two horses having been seen in the neighbourhood, cheered me up, for I had no doubt of my father having sent them for me.

CHAPTER III.

AFTER having been compelled to undergo the unpleasant change of garments, for those in which I was now dressed were none of the most agreeable, I sat myself down in a corner of the tent, ruminating on my fate. I thought of home and of my dear father and mother, and wondered whether I should ever see them again. And yet I had no idea that any very ill-treatment of me was intended, and this consideration, together with the comfortable reflection that one at least among them interested herself in my favour, dispelled in some degree my uneasiness, and mitigated the horror with which I had always been accustomed to regard these vagabond tribes. Still, the feeling of having to pass a night with them in a large wood made me shudder again.

It was not long, however, before a new cause for apprehension excited me. There was a movement and bustle which indicated a breaking up of the camp. In half an hour we were on the march. Luckily for my now almost shoeless feet, I was mounted on a raw-boned horse. The young girl walked close by my side, but said nothing. We went in an opposite direction from that of the road, so that I gave up all hope of falling in with the servant sent out in search of me, and made an attempt to question my companion; but

she raised her finger to her lips, in token of silence. We traversed the wood as best we might, where every track was tangled and overgrown, until we came to a small open space. Here we halted, and soon everything began again to wear the appearance of a camp.

The sun had long since sunk beneath the horizon. It was a clear frosty November night. The moon was unclouded, and the stars shining brightly through the waving branches of the trees. But it was very cold, and all around was comfortless and dreary, and the longing for home came still stronger upon me, as the prospect of my return to it grew fainter. As I sat apart from the rest, who were assembled around a large fire, by the light of which every feature was distinctly visible, I could not help fixing my eyes on the countenance of her who had made such an impression upon me; and as I looked upon it the feeling of utter desolation forsook me. Although she had spoken only one sentence to me, yet that one sentence came to my comfort and relief; for surely, thought I, she looks far too innocent to deceive.

A considerable time had elapsed—I knew not how long, for I had fallen asleep several times. I was still in the same place, and no one had spoken to me, when the man who had left the camp, at the instance, as I thought, of the young girl, returned, and threw down before the fire a bleeding sheep, saying, “There, old hell-dame, will that satisfy thee?”

The old woman seemed alarmed, and said something to him, when he exclaimed in a violent passion, “What! Not got rid of him yet? Why, we shall all be hanged; and though it doesn’t matter what becomes of thy skinny neck, yet, have a care for those who are not so far on the road to — as yself.” He then came up to me, but I was lying down,

and seemed to be asleep. I could observe, however, all his movements, and saw him hide the sheep in the bushes.

The expression "got rid of" impressed me fearfully, for I had heard of men being hanged for sheep-stealing; and possibly they might murder me, I thought, fearing I might tell what I had seen. Having concealed the carcass, the man came towards me again. I closed my eyes, and held my breath for fear. He stood by me for a minute, and then passed on.

As they were afterwards carousing together, I saw the one who had robbed me take the ring out of his pocket, and heard him saying something to the others about having taken it from that boy there, pointing to me; and then he made a show of offering it to the young girl.

At length, completely worn out by fatigue of body and mind, I fell into a profound sleep. I know not how long it had lasted, when I was awakened by a slight tap on the shoulder; and raising myself, I saw, by the light of the moon, the beautiful face of the gipsy-girl. She placed her hand upon my mouth, saying in a whisper, "Speak not, but follow me." I instantly obeyed. We passed out from the encampment, quietly stealing away from the sleepers and snorers around, and taking the path into the wood.

"Here are your own clothes," said my guide; "change quickly."

After we had proceeded some little way, I ventured to ask her some questions; but she replied with evasive answers. At last I expressed my astonishment that she, who was so different from all the others, could endure to live with such people.

"This is not my own tribe," was her reply. "I have been with them only for a short time, and I am so disgusted

with their way of living, that it makes me most wretched. It is so different from the tribe of my dear father"—she stopped, unable to proceed for some time; and I could see that she was using her utmost exertions to repress her tears. "That was honest," she at last resumed, "and lived by the labour of their own hands; but here there is only plunder and robbery."

"Where is your father?" I asked.

"He died about six months ago," she answered, mournfully, "and since then I have been living with the same tribe, until within about the last three weeks; when, being too ill to accompany them to the north, I was committed to the charge of this branch tribe, as they called it, but of whose doings I am sure they can know nothing."

"I was quite certain those men were not your brothers."

"No, I am thankful to say," she emphatically replied; "if I had a brother, I should not now be here."

"What a bad man that must be, who brought the sheep to the camp!"

She suddenly stopped short, and as she turned full towards me, I saw a paleness on her countenance. Her voice faltered as she said, "And did you see that?"

"Yes," I replied, "but you have nothing to fear from me; I look upon you as the preserver of my life, and not a word shall ever pass my lips to injure you."

I said this with so much earnestness, that she answered, "I believe you, and will trust you." She then walked on before, without saying another word, until, having proceeded a considerable distance through the wood, she stopped, and turning to me said, "I must now leave you. Follow this path until you come to a broader one running across; there you will meet your servant—unless, indeed," lowering her

voice, "I have been deceived. If so, and he should not be there, conceal yourself in the thick underwood, and remain quiet until morning, and then make the best of your way to the public-house at the bottom of the hill. Farewell! say nothing of what you have witnessed; it is all I ask for having, perhaps, saved your life."

I assured her that she might trust me entirely. We then parted with mutual feelings of affection and regret; and she, the young, the beautiful, and the innocent, retraced her steps to the scenes of infamy and vice.

I followed the path as directed. After walking a little way, solitude began to make me feel uneasy, and I turned round to see if the pretty gipsy-girl was still near me. She had again stopped, and was watching me. A strong impulse seized me to run back to her; but the thought of so soon meeting the servant and my pony overruled it, and I hastened on my way, starting at my own shadow, and at every rustling among the trees. At last I arrived at the place appointed, but no servant or horse was there. Surely, thought I, she did not mean to deceive me; it must be a mistake on my part, or that of the servant. And then the idea rushed into my mind that her suspicions were well founded, and that she had been herself deceived.

So here I was, in the middle of a large wood, all alone. The moon, too, was just setting, and I felt most miserable. I began to call out the name of the servant, but was frightened at the sound of my own voice. I then, according to the directions given me, concealed myself among the brushwood. I had not been very long there, when I heard footsteps almost close to the place where I was lying. My first thought was to jump up, concluding it to be the servant; but a moment's consideration determined me to make sure of

this before I moved. The figure passed so near as to enable me to recognise, to my sorrow and consternation, the man who had brought the sheep to the camp, and of whose intentions towards me I had but too much reason to be in dread. He continued walking about the cross paths for some minutes, and then took the way by which I had come from the camp.

So wearied was I, at length, that I again fell asleep, in spite of my fears, until awakened once more, by the same gentle hand as in the fore part of the night.

"You are now safe," she said. "Though he did deceive me, it has not been to his purpose, and he is now far enough off."

She then put a lock of her beautiful hair into my hand, and said, "Keep this in remembrance of your promise. And now, once more, farewell; follow this path, which will conduct you to the border of the wood. You will then see a road before you, and cannot miss your way to the public-house, which is at the foot of the next hill—we may meet again in happier times."

My little heart beat high, and again I promised silence. I then kissed her fondly, and she, darting into the wood, was out of sight in a moment.

I now hastened on my way, and in half an hour's time arrived at the public-house. I knocked at the door; a hasty step approached, and I rushed into my father's arms.

I found that persons had been sent out in every direction to search for me, and that my father had judged it best to remain himself at this house, as a kind of head-quarters, where he might receive reports, and whence he might issue instructions.

A few days after this occurrence we returned home to Beechwood Lodge. As I had said nothing respecting the

ring, every one naturally concluded that I had not found it; and my father declaring that he had sent me on a wild-goose chase, never questioned me on the subject. In answer to other inquiries, I said that I had lost my way. This was my first untruth, and bitterly did it haunt me for many a long month. How the first sin weighs upon the conscience! but alas! how soon does the conscience retreat before crime, until deeds are done without a thought, the bare possibility of committing which would have been contemplated by us in our better days with dismay and abhorrence. Oh for the innocence of early years—for the eye that closed at the sight of sin, and the heart that quailed at the thought of evil! For, indeed, the stains of later guilt eat deeper into the soul than all the scars we encounter in the battle of life!

CHAPTER IV.

FOUR years passed away over the peaceful village of Beechwood without any event of sufficient interest to be mentioned here. I had not again seen the countenance of the beautiful gipsy-girl, and yet she had often, very often, occupied my thoughts, and had never been omitted in my prayers. The lock of hair also had been put away in a place known only to myself. As I grew older I began to view my secret in a more serious light, and to comprehend the nature of my own share in the transaction. The sheep which had been stolen belonged to a farmer in my uncle's neighbourhood, and I had heard the affair often talked about, but still my promise forbade me to utter a word indicating the slightest acquaintance with it. The consciousness, how-

ever, of acting disingenuously by my dear parents frequently damped my spirits, and at times made me very melancholy.

Mr. Waldy still continued to instruct me, and as I was reading for college, a great part of the day was given up to study. He was still the same melancholy man, and I often suspected that there was something which weighed heavily on his mind. When alone with me, he would frequently sit for several minutes together staring on vacancy, and at other times was extremely excited; but as he had always been an eccentric person, these abstractions came to be regarded at last as natural parts of his character.

It was about the end of the fourth year that my father, after receiving a letter by the post, became greatly agitated. He sat for some time perfectly still and silent. Presently he rose up and paced the room with hurried and irregular steps, occasionally pausing, his arms folded across his breast. His countenance betokened some strong mental conflict. He looked at me several times, as if he wished to say something, but again as suddenly turned away. My thoughts immediately winged their flight to the gipsies, and to what had happened the night I was with them, and I imagined all kinds of unhappy consequences. I was at last so uncomfortable that I arose and left the room.

I remained about an hour in my own apartment, when my father sent for me. So completely had the cause of his anxiety connected itself in my mind with the gipsies' camp, and the deed I had been privy to there, that I felt, as I obeyed the summons, as if I were going into the presence of a judge to receive the sentence of condemnation. When I entered the room, I found him still agitated, and yet there was a calm expression on his countenance. My mother and sister were sitting there also, and had evidently been weeping.

As I opened the door, I fancied I heard my mother say, "Surely he is innocent."

My father motioned me to a seat, saying, "I wish to speak to you, Herbert, on a subject which I have only this morning heard of. It has caused us a great shock, but I hope we are prepared to say, "God's will be done."

"My dear father," I exclaimed, with emotion, for my feelings had quite got the better of me, "ask me nothing, for I am bound by the strongest of all obligations to reveal nothing, and it is my fixed resolution to say nothing."

My father looked at me in utter astonishment for several seconds, and then said, "To what, sir, do you allude? Is there anything which is to be concealed from me, and that by my own son? Impossible!" He then walked about the room still more agitated than before, whilst I began to think that I had got on the wrong subject, and looked to my mother and sister for an explanation, which they seemed to think rested more properly with me.

My father took several turns in the room, and then, stopping short, said, "Herbert, I desire you instantly to acquaint me with the subject to which you allude; it is your bounden duty to do so."

I was obliged still to persist in my resolution. "My dear father," I replied, at last, "our thoughts are on different subjects. What has caused you so much sorrow, I know not, but that to which I have just alluded can have no reference to it. Were I at liberty to tell you what I have promised never to reveal, you would acknowledge that I have acted honourably in all I have done; whereas, were I to break my promise, and tell you, I am sure you would never trust me again."

He seemed pleased, and certainly more calm, at this

answer, and taking my hand affectionately, he replied, "Herbert, I have always found you to act openly and honourably, and am, therefore, convinced that you have good reasons for your conduct, and shall never ask you another question about it.

"To return, then, to what I was intending to say just now. Immediate steps must be taken to meet the difficulties to which we are reduced. My estate must be sold, as well as our carriages and horses. We must live in some small cottage, and our establishment, even there, must be placed on the most economical footing."

I was then told that my father's bankers had failed in an extensive speculation, and that there was no hope of their creditors receiving more than a shilling in the pound. My father was, of all others, the most deeply involved. He had been bound for them to Government as receivers-general for the county, in the amount of £10,000. So great had been his confidence in them, confirmed by feelings of private friendship for one of the partners of the firm, that he had assisted them by a considerable loan, to enable them to enter on some commercial enterprise, which promised to be highly remunerative, and apparently without risk. In addition to which he had unfortunately just placed in their hands a large sum of money, which he had borrowed on the security of the estate of Beechwood, for the purchase of two or three very eligible farms contiguous to that property.

Thus were my dear parents reduced at once from affluence to comparative poverty: compelled to relinquish comforts which habit had rendered almost necessary; and deprived of that which, above all else, was their pleasure and delight—the power of relieving the wants and of gratifying the wishes of others. They must leave the home endeared to them by

the fondest recollections; where their wedded life had been passed; where their children had been cradled; and where every new relation of life had opened to them new sources of the purest enjoyment, and bound them to it by fresh ties. All must pass into the stranger's hands. It was a severe trial, but they were supported by that which alone can support in the hour of sorrow and affliction—a firm trust in God. They rested on the realities of religion. In the days of their prosperity, they had “not eaten their morsel themselves alone, but the fatherless and widow had eaten thereof with them. They had delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him; the blessing of him that was ready to perish had come upon them, and they had caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.” And now, in their adverse days, they were not forsaken. He in whose strength, and by whose grace, they had done all, was with them; He “gave them quietness, and who then,” or what then, “could make trouble?”

The day of sale arrived. Without a tear from either of my parents, estate, house, horses, carriages, furniture, became the property of others—sufficient only of the latter being reserved to make comfortable a small cottage which my father had taken near the village of Beechwood, about a mile from the Lodge, our former mansion.

My father's income, after paying all his creditors in full, barely amounted to £500 per annum, without any means of increasing it, for he had been brought up to no profession; and as his family consisted of four children, besides my mother, strict and rigid economy was indispensable. All our servants, with the exception of two females, were parted with; and as our cottage was very small, no more were required. My father had made up his mind to dispose of a

small pony-carriage which my mother used to drive, as he could not afford a man-servant to look after it; but my little brother and I protested against this, undertaking to look after it ourselves. I shall never forget the expression of my father's countenance when we said this. He made no other reply—but my dear mother's little pony and phaeton were not sold. I saw a tear in my sister's eye at parting with her beautiful riding-horse, but it was soon wiped away, and she declared afterwards that she was ashamed of her weakness.

My father became the instructor of my next brother, whom he was now obliged to remove from school; while my sister undertook to teach the younger one, in order to relieve my mother, whose health was not good. Jane had also her village school to attend to. I redoubled my diligence under my very able tutor. And thus time passed away insensibly and agreeably, because we were all usefully employed; and we practically experienced that the happiness of "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

The good Mr. Waldy, when he called a day or two after our removal, presented to my mother a few articles which he had bought at the sale, and which he knew she valued. This simple act of kindness was the only thing which overpowered her, and she could not restrain her tears. Some-time after this, he requested her to be his almoner; saying, in a very feeling and delicate manner, that there must be many cases in the parish and neighbourhood which were not likely to come to his own knowledge, but where a little aid might be greatly needed; at the same time putting ten guineas into her hand. He was full of benevolence for others. As for himself, he appeared more than ever abstracted in thought, and was at times wrapt in the deepest melancholy,

into the cause of which no one presumed to inquire. He was also observed to leave home more frequently than he had ever done before. Altogether, it was evident that he was in a very unsettled state of mind.

We had been living in our new abode about six months, when my father called me one day into his study—a place always resorted to for any serious conversation—and with manifest pain to his feelings, informed me that it was necessary I should leave home. “Of course,” said he, “my prospects respecting you, and yours respecting yourself, are greatly changed. I had hoped to have seen you heir to the estates which still lie around us, but in which we have no longer an interest. I had hoped to have seen you distinguished at the University. I was not without a hope of seeing you take your seat in the parliament of your country. But God has willed it otherwise. I have received to-day a letter from a London friend, offering you a clerkship in a public office; and you know, Herbert”—here I could see a tear trickle down his cheeks, as he turned and walked towards the window; but he soon recovered his self-possession, and continued—“You know, Herbert, it is absolutely necessary that you should be of some profession, so as to gain your own livelihood.”

I assented to all my father said, and determined to accept the offer of his friend. “At what time am I to go?” I asked, with unusual seriousness.

“We will talk of that at another time,” answered my father, taking my hand, whilst a smile forced itself upon his countenance; we have said enough now on this painful subject. I will write, however, and accept the situation for you. And may the Almighty prosper it to you, and keep you in all your ways!” he added, in an earnest manner, at

the same time affectionately pressing my hand. I felt as if my heart would break, and abruptly left the room.

At length the dreaded day arrived. There is always a loneliness, an utter loneliness, when quitting home for the first time. My place was taken by the daily coach for London—the coach arrived—the parting came—the parting was over. I took my seat on the box, the horses were in full trot, and the next moment I saw my dear mother's face bathed in tears, as we passed the parlour window of our little cottage.

CHAPTER V.

THERE is no scene calculated to make so deep and salutary an impression on the mind, or which varies so much in its circumstances, as that of a death-bed. Sometimes calm and peaceful; oftener, we fear, full of restless and troubled thoughts. At one time sublime in the triumph it affords of spiritual strength over bodily weakness and suffering; at another, exhibiting the consequences of a life passed without God in the world, in colours too dark to be portrayed. Now displaying that humble trust and unshaken faith which, to the last, brightens up the faded cheek and the sunken eye; and here, again, presenting the sad spectacle of one compelled to look back where there is nothing to cheer or to console, because not daring to look forward where there is nothing to hope.

It was about six months after the occurrence which closed the preceding chapter, that my poor dear mother, whose life had been—so far as mortal's can be—one continued course of all that is excellent and pious, lay on the bed of death.

On one side was my father, with her hand clasped in his, looking the picture of despair. My sister, supported by my arm, whilst ill-concealed grief shook her whole frame, was standing on the other. An infant in its nurse's arms was being hushed to sleep in a distant corner of the room.

"Oh! dearest of all human beings," said my father, as, with a look of unutterable anguish, he pressed her hand to his lips—"Oh, dearest! say that you now forgive me a life of inattention and neglect; say that you now forgive me every harsh word, every angry look. Oh! that I could recall the past, to love you more, to anticipate all your wishes, to live for you, and you alone! Oh! let me hear that word, 'forgiveness,' from your own dear lips!"

"I have nothing to forgive, dearest William; you have ever been to me the kindest of husbands," said my mother, with all the energy of which she was capable; "and now that I am about to leave you," she added, "I pray God to bless you for the past, and ever to have you under his guidance and protection."

"To you," she continued, turning to my sister and myself, "I now look to do all in your power to lighten the cares and sorrows of your dear father. Make him happy by your dutifulness and attention."

I never shall forget the earnestness with which we promised. My sister seized her hand, and sobbed aloud, whilst silent tears trickled down my own cheeks. She then sent for the younger children, and, having kissed them, committed them to a sister's care. I still see the calm resignation of her countenance, which nothing but a firm trust in her Saviour could have given.

"Oh! again," cried my father, in tones which went to my heart, "say that word 'forgiveness;' where are you going,

and when will you come back?" I perceived that his mind was wandering. I went round to the other side of the bed, and took his hand in mine. He gave a sudden start, and sunk back upon a chair. My mother, feeling no longer the pressure of my father's hand, drooped lower on the pillow, and I saw that her last moments were come. She whispered, "Bring the baby." The baby was brought; she pressed it to her bosom with what strength she had. It was the last effort of expiring nature, and with it life itself had passed away.

* * * * *

It was on a beautiful evening in the month of September, 1810, when the sun was setting in all its splendour, when every field presented its pleasing and busy scene of bustle and labour, when the foliage was changed to that endless variety of tint, blending so harmoniously together—the precursor of unwelcome winter, the last lingerer in summer's train—that, having leave of absence, I once again entered the village of Beechwood. From the top of the coach might be seen walking by the rippling stream three figures—two in deep mourning, the one an elderly gentleman, the other a lady. A hasty glance enabled me to recognise my father and my sister, but who the third person was I could not conjecture. He was young and gentlemanly in appearance, but I was certain that I had never seen him before. It took me but a few seconds to bound from the coach to the place where they were standing, to greet my father, and to embrace my sister.

"And now," said my father, "that you have performed all that is dutiful and affectionate, courtesy must not be omitted; and while Jane is recovering from her blushes, let me introduce you to Mr. Henry Cranstoun, who is come down to pass a month or two with us in the country."

I was taking off my hat, but he immediately extended his hand, saying with an air of frankness and cordiality, "Let us shake hands, Mr. Anneslie; I have the pleasure of knowing your family so well, that I claim to be no stranger to yourself."

I met his friendly advances in the same spirit, and we shook hands as if we had known each other for years. Then, turning to my sister, he said, "I shall now leave you to converse freely with your brother after his long absence from home. My mother has, I believe, asked the pleasure of seeing you at dinner to-morrow, and I have now a request of my own to prefer. Mr. Anneslie, you will by that time have told all and heard all, may I hope you will then give me an opportunity of improving our acquaintance at my father's dinner-table?"

I assured him that nothing would give me greater pleasure; he then cordially wished us a good evening, and took his leave.

"How do you like your new neighbours?" was my first question; "and what do they think of the country, and of our estate of Beechwood?"

"They are certainly very pleasant and agreeable people," answered my father.

"Quite delightful neighbours," exclaimed my sister with greater warmth, "so kind in every way. We are, indeed, and so is Beechwood generally, most fortunate in having such purchasers of our dear home. Mr. Cranstoun gave me yesterday ten guineas for my school, and Mrs. Cranstoun takes great interest in it, so that it is as flourishing as I could wish. They are making a few alterations in the house and grounds, which may be improvements, perhaps, though I dare say I shall scarcely think them so."

"The Mr. Cranstoun who has just left us is certainly a very gentlemanly person, and has evidently seen the best society, and if they are all like him, I agree with you, my dear sister, that you may well be warm in their praises." As I said this I saw a faint blush on her cheek, which made me smile.

"Really, Herbert," said she, trying to hide a slight confusion, "it is as I say; but you will soon know them, and be able to judge for yourself, and you will then see that I do not speak of them in too high terms."

"I do not doubt it in the least; I have too high an opinion of your judgment in these matters," I said, laughing again.

"You have come home in a very satirical humour, dear Herbert," she replied, taking my hand; "we must try to amend you before we allow you to go at large again."

"What sport have they had this September in the field—for of course you know, Jane, how many birds Mr. Cranstoun has killed?"

"I shall answer no more of your questions," said my sister, in a goodhumoured manner, but affecting to be a little displeased; "you must ask papa about all these things, for I know nothing of dogs or guns."

"Only of bows and arrows," I rejoined, being rather in a teasing humour. "But how are my brothers?"

"They are quite well," answered my father, "and are playing at cricket with the young Cranstouns. Let us go and see them," he added, taking out his watch, "for it wants an hour to dinner time; we are a little later than usual to-day on your account, dear Herbert," he said, smiling.

We then walked towards the park, and I saw at a

little distance within the gates a party of young boys at play.

Oh, happiest period of life, when no real cares and anxieties are come to the birth! when we scarcely form a wish beyond the amusements of the next holiday; when a long innings and a good score are the height of our ambition; and when it has not so much as entered into our hearts to conceive how the bitter feelings of jealousy, and the pangs of disappointed hope, are sufficient of themselves, without any other of the thousand ills which manhood is heir to, to make one muse upon such a scene as this, and inwardly to say, "Would I were again a child!"

Away went bat and ball, as soon as my brothers saw me, and off they came scampering towards us, their faces beaming with delight. I had always been a great favourite with them. Whatever they wanted they came to me for; I was to do this or to ask that; in short, with them I was everything.

"Oh, Herbert," they exclaimed, both at once, "we are so glad you are come back! we thought you would never be here. Papa has promised us a week's holidays when you arrived, and you said you would take us out in the boat. We have not been once in it all the time you have been gone."

"And I am happy to tell you, Herbert," said my father, "that they have quite deserved their week's holidays. So, as there is nothing like the present time, they shall begin to-morrow. Only, remember, boys, that this does not excuse the hour's work daily in the garden."

We had by this time come in sight of our little cottage. It looked very neat, with the small flower-garden attached, and the creepers climbing up the walls on each side of the

long French windows. But there was one object which attracted my attention beyond every other—an infant lying asleep in its nurse's arms.

"Bring the baby to her brother," said my father to the nurse. I lifted the veil. It was a beautiful child; and as I kissed her, a tear rose to my eye and dropped on her cheek.

"Ah! Master Herbert," exclaimed the old nurse, as I went to my room to prepare for dinner, "how glad I am to see your dear face again, and you looking so well! Your poor father has been sad of late, and all, I believe, because you could not come when you were expected. But, Master Herbert, you do not half enough admire the room that your sister, dear soul; that looks after everything so well, has taken such trouble about. I believe she has been in here fifty times to-day, to see that all was right, or if there was anything else that you could want. And your father, too, has bought such a fine horse, that, they say, jumps like a deer, and I am sure it is for you. And then the folks at the Lodge are such nice people, and such fine young ladies, too."

How long the dear good creature would have gone on, I know not, but I was obliged to put a stop to her further communications, by telling her that it wanted only a few minutes to dinner, and I must dress.

"Ah! Master Herbert, many's the time that I have dressed ye, but——" I was opening a drawer, and did not hear the remainder.

It was quite true that my father, who had determined I should have every amusement in his power to give me during my respite from the duties of my office, had bought me a horse. "We will sell him again, Herbert, when you are gone; and if you show him off to advantage, he may fetch more than we gave for him."

I felt my father's kindness greatly, and retired to bed that night happier than I had been for many months past.

I rose early the next day. It was a fine fresh morning—one of September's own. I took up my hat, and stole out without disturbing any one. Slowly I took my way towards the church, and entered the churchyard.

There is a sober and a soothing melancholy when musing amid these mansions of the dead, either in the dusky evening, or in the dewy morn; when the labours of the busy day are closed, or ere they have yet well begun; when the dim lights are glimmering from the cottage windows of the village, or the little curtains have not yet been drawn aside to admit the first streaks of the dawn; when the only moving figures which break in upon the stillness of the scene are some late straggler from a distant field, or some plodding ploughman, who is stirring before his fellows. Then to stand among the crumbling memorials of the departed, "the scrolls that teach thee to live and die;" and to glance from the one to the other, and to see how, at every age, from infancy to fourscore years and ten, the frail tenement had been left untenanted, and the spirit had returned to Him who gave it; and to have the thoughts called back to some whom you had almost forgotten, or whom you have but lately missed at their daily occupations, or with whom you had perhaps held sweet converse;—it is a scene deeply solemn, meditative, and instructive.

But who shall define the thoughts or the feelings, when visiting, for the first time, the grave of one with whose image and endearments are for ever interwoven all the earliest and sweetest of our recollections—of one who had fondled us in her arms, and nursed and nurtured us, and

borne with our teasing, and our frowardness, and our petulance, with a patience that never failed;—whose gentle kindness cheered, though it chid us;—whose presence so enlivened every place, and brightened every meal, that if she were not there, nothing looked or tasted as it was wont;—who so entered into all our childish thoughts, and childish ways, and childish sports, that she might have seemed but an elder sister, only that we loved her better;—who, in graver matters, was our instructress, our guide, our example;—whose pious care implanted in infancy, and anxiously watched over in our opening years, those principles and precepts of revealed religion, which alone can enable us to die in peace, and in sure and certain hope;—who shall define the thoughts or the feelings, when standing by a mother's grave?

Such were my pensive musings, when I perceived the sexton stealing along with silent step towards the principal entrance at the west end of the church. He quietly turned the key, gently moved the door on its hinges, and, seeing that he was not unobserved, respectfully touched his hat, and retired.

I entered. Opposite to me, immediately over the altar, was a memorial window. It had been put up unknown to me. My feelings for a moment overpowered me, and I rested against a pillar. The subject was, the risen Saviour revealing himself at the sepulchre to his weeping and inquiring disciple. So exquisite was the painting, that in the beaming eye, the look of love, and the lips just parted, you read that the word "Mary" had been spoken. And from the kneeling figure, with eyes and hands uplifted, you seemed to hear the responsive tones of devout and grateful recognition—"My Master, my Lord!"

Beneath was the simple inscription—

“MARY AMELIA ANNESLIE,

“DEPARTED THIS LIFE

“FEB. 17TH, 1810.”

CHAPTER VI.

It was impossible not to feel rather sad as we drove through the park to Beechwood Lodge to dine with the Cranstouns. I had entered the mansion only once before since we had been compelled to leave it, and not once since my mother's death. Every object that met my view brought some recollection to my mind of former happy days, and left the pang of regret behind. The rooms, though newly and handsomely furnished, seemed frightfully familiar to me, and at the moment that we were ushered into the drawing-room, I would far rather have jumped again into the pony-carriage and have driven home.

There was only Mrs. Cranstoun seated at a small table at the further end of the room. She immediately arose, and received my father and sister with that grace and elegance of manner which is termed good breeding, and is, I believe, to be acquired only by an early and continued intercourse with the best society. She also shook hands with me, and expressed great pleasure in being able at last to welcome me back to Beechwood.

“Mr. Cranstoun,” she continued, “has been out with the hounds to-day, *cub-hunting*, I think, they term it, and Henry has been shooting, which accounts for their being so late in making their appearance. But here they come to offer their own apology.”

At that moment the two gentlemen entered, and, after the usual salutations had passed, I began to question Henry Cranstoun as to the day's sport.

"My father, of course, did not expect any so early in the season. And we," he added, turning and introducing me to a young man who just then joined us, and whom I afterwards discovered to be a cousin of his, on the point of leaving Oxford, with an income of £10,000 a year, "cannot boast of much. I am a very indifferent shot, and Mr. Dastard has not been so successful to-day as usual. In fact, we want your assistance, Mr. Anneslie, to make up a really good bag. The keeper declares that you are a capital shot; so you must come and shoot with us to-morrow."

I readily accepted the invitation, and was not sorry in the opportunity of proving by my achievements that I merited the character which had been given me.

The door opened again, and two young ladies made their appearance. One was above the middle height—indeed, might be considered tall; her hair was dark, and neatly braided on each side of a face in which the features were all good, but there was a want of animation. The other, a year younger, was not so handsome, but very much prettier, her countenance being lighted up with all the vivacity in which her sister's was deficient. Her soft blue eyes spoke at once to the heart. Her long auburn hair, instead of being braided, flowed down in beautiful ringlets. Her figure was symmetry itself, and she moved with a graceful ease which riveted the attention, and compelled the eye to follow her.

I was introduced to the elder Miss Cranstoun, who made me rather a formal courtesy; but, owing to some trifling circumstance which chanced at the moment, this ceremony was omitted in respect to the younger, by the side of whom

I presently found myself seated, with my sister on her left hand. As I did not immediately address myself to her, she turned round to the latter, and said loud enough for me to hear,

“How very remiss some one is, Miss Anneslie! I know not whether it rests with yourself, or my own party, that I have not had the pleasure of an introduction to your brother.”

Then turning to me, without waiting a reply, she said, “Well, Mr. Anneslie, as both your family and my own seem to have laid an embargo on our acquaintance, I must introduce myself, and welcome you home.”

I bowed my acknowledgments, and she continued, “Your sister I can excuse, for she appears to have all the cares of the village on her hands, besides her school, and is so beloved by all that I assure you it is a pleasure, as well as a source of much instruction, to accompany her on her rounds. Young Mr. Herbert, too, is a name which I hear so often that I have felt quite interested in him by compulsion.”

“I hope, Miss Cranstoun, that I shall prove myself, at the least, grateful for this friendly interest; but I fear that my kind friends in Beechwood have spoken of me too partially.”

“Well! you certainly appear to be such a favourite, that they may fairly be suspected of a little bias. But I am bound in candour, Mr. Anneslie, and, indeed, much disposed, to give them large credit.”

This was so kindly expressed, and accompanied by such a gentleness of manner and appearance of sincerity, that I was persuaded our misfortunes had awakened a real sympathy in her heart; and I thanked her for the compliment.

“Do not say *compliment*, Mr. Anneslie, for I abhor compliments, and consider them to belong, of exclusive right, to little pages and ladies’ maids.”

"Then, if any pretty thought should ever come into my mind, may I hope you will allow me the privilege of a little page?"

"Oh! certainly," replied she, laughing, "if you will not suppose me to be a lady's maid. Does your sister take little pages into her school to instruct?"

"I would make interest with her to do so, if you are in the habit of attending, and I might be deemed worthy to be admitted into your class."

The butler announcing dinner, I offered her my arm, which she readily accepted, but at the same time cast a glance at her cousin, Mr. Dastard, who was hastening across the room.

"I hope, Miss Cranstoun, that I am not aspiring to this honour, to the prejudice of a more agreeable claimant?"

"Allow me, at least, an opportunity of judging, Mr. Annealie." Then, turning to her cousin, she said, smiling, "You must regard it as a privilege, Mr. Dastard, not to be looked upon this evening as a stranger."

The glance which he gave, first at her and then at me, could not be mistaken. It was full of jealousy, pride, and mortification, and did not pass unnoticed by her for whom it was particularly intended.

What volumes might be written, and how might the philosopher descant on that word *jealousy*, for it has been fertile in romantic incidents, and in moral lessons of a terrific character, beyond any other passion which disturbs the peace of domestic and social life! There are few minds entirely, and at all times, free from its baneful influence; and of what misery and crime has it not been the cause! It has obliterated love from the fondest hearts, and changed it into the most bitter hatred and animosity. It has converted the

happiness of whole families into the extreme of wretchedness and despair. It has transformed the beautiful character of gentle and fascinating woman into that of the frantic hyena robbed of her whelps. It has cast her down from being the brightest ornament of society, to become the very byword of infamy and scorn. It has nerved the arm, formed only to fondle and caress, to dare and to do the direst of deeds. It has—

“What shall I give you for your thoughts, Mr. Anneslie? I suppose, as I ventured to introduce myself to you, I must now ask you to take wine with me.”

“I beg a thousand pardons, Miss Cranstoun,” I returned, recovering from my reverie.

“I do not remember ever to have asked your sister, during our short acquaintance, if she rides on horseback.”

“It is, I—I mean it was a favourite exercise with her,” I stammered out; but instantly recovering myself, I added, “her horse was obliged to be parted with.”

Her countenance immediately betrayed a strong feeling of sympathy and regret for having inadvertently touched upon a subject which she perceived to be painful to me in its recollections.

“Because I was thinking,” she continued, slightly colouring, “that as my sister seldom uses her horse, Miss Anneslie might occasionally accompany me in my rides. There is a place about six miles from us of which I have heard so much that I quite long to see it; it is the view from the top of some high hill.”

“Elton Hill you must mean, I think; there is certainly a very beautiful view from it, well worth going double the distance to see.”

“Suppose then, Mr. Anneslie, as you know the country so well, you were to be our guide. Perhaps my cousin will

go also, or if not, we will place ourselves under your escort. I am sure Emma will be delighted to lend Miss Anneslie her horse."

"Nothing, I assure you, Miss Cranstoun, could give me greater pleasure than being your groom in waiting; but your powers of persuasion must be greater than mine, if you can prevail on Jane to accompany us—she obstinately refuses to mount my horse, and replies to my earnest entreaties that it would be foolish to renew a fondness for an amusement in which she can never again indulge."

"But she can ride your horse when you are absent."

"It is to be sold again when I leave Beechwood," I replied, without the least reserve; for her easy, open, and delightful manner had communicated to me a corresponding feeling of confidence.

We then spoke on different subjects, and so fascinated was I by the good humour and good sense of all she said, that I can tell nothing about the general conversation of the table.

After the ladies had retired, the principal topic was the sports of the field, which afforded me less pleasure than usual; for I could think of nothing but Fanny Cranstoun, and longed for the time to rejoin her in the drawing-room.

"I think you used to hunt with Lord Clydesdale, did you not, Mr. Anneslie?" asked Mr. Cranstoun of my father.

"Occasionally I have been out with him, but not for the last four years; in fact, until this year he has not been at Atherstone Park for some time."

"He is rather violent in the field, is he not?" asked Henry Cranstoun.

"I have seen him very angry indeed," answered my father; "but I believe he loses his temper only in the field. He is a most polished man in society. I have heard a lady,

herself moving in the highest circles, observe that, whatever Lord Clydesdale may be elsewhere, in the drawing-room he is the highest-bred man of the day; what our friend Horace would have pronounced, Mr. Henry Cranstoun, (for I am speaking to a young man and a scholar,)

Ad unguem

Factus homo.

But there is a vast difference between a room full of ladies and a field of unmanageable horses, and sometimes more unmanageable riders; and every excuse must be made for a man who is giving sport to the whole country at his sole expense. But shooting used to be my favourite amusement."

"Then do come and shoot with us, Mr. Anneslie, whenever you please," said Henry Cranstoun. "I assure you we require a little help to be enabled to bring home the bags which the keeper and his pony used to feel so weighty; and, moreover, a little instruction from an experienced sportsman, to teach us how to do our part, would be thankfully received."

"Do resume your gun, Mr. Anneslie, by all means," exclaimed Mr. Cranstoun, seconding his son's proposal; "for unless something more is done than has been done yet, our distant friends will not give the preserves of Beechwood due credit for partridges and hares."

"I feel the kindness of you both greatly," replied my father; "but I have determined never again to indulge in those fascinating amusements, which I can no longer afford; and turning to me, he added, "if I were you, Herbert, I would make a similar resolution."

During this conversation Mr. Dastard had sat mute, and I could see by his stern countenance that he was out of humour. He was what some would have called a handsome man, but there was an unpleasant expression in his features, and occasionally a remarkably ill-natured sarcastic look,

which was very repulsive; but then, ten thousand pounds per annum in the opposite scale turn the balance with such preponderating weight, that a bad temper and cross looks, like the fates of Troy, kick the beam, and are lifted up quite out of sight, although in their character and consequences they have commonly been supposed to have rather a downward tendency. I had not the slightest doubt of this wealthy aspirant being a suitor for the hand of one of the young ladies, and I thought I had already seen enough to tell me where his preference lay.

When we returned to the drawing-room, Fanny Cranstoun was seated at the piano, accompanying it with her voice, and sang several songs with much taste. Having concluded a beautiful little air, she came up to me with a triumphant smile, and exclaimed, "I have been successful, Mr. Anneslie, and now the only thing that remains is to fix the day."

"That, Miss Cranstoun, is certainly a prerogative belonging to yourself."

"Pardon me; you are here only for a short time, and may claim the privilege, which at least we award you, of consulting your own convenience."

"Then, since you are so indulgent, shall we name the day after to-morrow?"

"Very good; at three o'clock in the afternoon." Then turning to Mr. Dastard, who had overheard our conversation, she said, "Perhaps my cousin will accompany us?"

"Certainly, since I see that I am so much wanted," was his uncourteous reply; the sarcastic expression of his countenance showing itself off to the best advantage.

Fanny turned away with a serious and grave look, and entered into conversation with my sister.

It was now time to return home, and as I shook hands with her who had made the evening pass so pleasantly to me, she said, "Do not forget Friday, Mr. Anneslie; for as the appointment is your own, we shall not allow you to alter it."

On my wishing Mr. Dastard good night, he made me a distant and formal bow, which I returned in a manner as cold and reserved as his own.

When I was alone in my room I thought over the events of the evening, and could not call to my recollection that I had ever passed one so agreeably before. There is something so pleasing and captivating in the frank and artless manner of a young and pretty girl, when free from all coquetry and deceitful ways of the world—there is something in it so near akin to purity and innocence, that no wonder my mind was full of Fanny Cranstoun. When I fell asleep, it was only to dream of her; and when I awoke next morning, it was only to grieve, far more bitterly than I ever had done before, over my real position in life.

CHAPTER VII.

IN my youthful days I thought that nothing could exceed the light and joyous sensations when, on a bright sunny morning I was entering on my first day's sport in September. For three years before the loss of our fortune, I had always been accustomed to look forward to the first of September as the happiest day in the year. The awaking from a restless night,—the opening of the case—the putting together the gun, which had been oiled, and polished, and furnished

with the choicest flints by my own hand—the unkennelling the dogs, as impatient as myself—the setting them free from the couples on the boundary of the first large field of stubble, with yonder turnip field in the distance. Oh, the indescribable delight experienced only in the early days of our sporting career! In manhood the same pleasures are still pursued with eagerness, the same day still looked forward to, but not with the same buoyant feelings of happy anticipation. There is always some care or thought which makes one's spirits hang fire, and which forces the comparison between the careless days of youth and the anxieties which so soon follow.

How differently had the first of September been passed by me this year from that which had been my wont! Instead of bounding forth with light and joyous step into the open fields, I had been cooped up all day in a dreary office at Whitehall. The twenty-fifth of the month was now passed, and I had not seen a gun, excepting in the shop-windows of the crowded streets of London. And now, thought I, as I walked to the Lodge to keep my appointment with Henry Cranstoun, I can follow this amusement, over the very grounds to which I once was heir, only by the chance invitation of another. I think my father advised me well.

"It is a beautiful morning, indeed," said my young friend, as he shook me warmly by the hand; "and as you know the grounds so well, we will leave the beat to-day entirely to you."

"I certainly ought to know something about the sporting localities of Beechwood, and hope that the result will prove that your reliance on me has not been misplaced."

"And that your promised engagements are equally to be

relied on," said Fanny Cranstoun, as she made her appearance at the hall-door.

"You hold me, then, so very unworthy a lady's confidence as to forget an engagement, and especially one," I added, as we shook hands, "from which I anticipate far more pleasure than from the sport of to-day."

Mr. Dastard just then passed, and we exchanged bows. There was the same forbidding scowl, which I imputed to his having overheard what I had said to Fanny. He was evidently an ill-tempered fellow; but there are many redeeming considerations in ten thousand pounds per annum.

The ground being left to me, I took a line of country where I had been in the habit of meeting with the best sport, and I was not disappointed in my expectation of finding game in abundance. Mr. Dastard continued towards me throughout the day the same ungracious behaviour, and we took only so much notice of each other as barely common politeness demanded. He was by no means silent, but his conversation was addressed either to Henry Cranstoun or the keeper.

The next day Jane and I kept our appointment with Fanny Cranstoun, whom we found ready dressed in her riding-habit on our arrival at the Lodge. Miss Cranstoun's horse was a beautiful animal, and my sister, who was a skilful as well as an elegant horsewoman, looked very handsome when mounted upon him, and I might well be proud of her appearance. Mr. Dastard had determined not to go, and Henry Cranstoun was out shooting. For the absence of the former I was not sorry; if I regretted that the latter was not with us, and that we were left to the awkward number of three, the reader is at liberty to set it down to my sister's account.

The loveliness of the day and the liveliness of the conversation brought us within sight of Elton Hill before I was well aware that we had traversed half the distance.

In approaching that eminence from Beechwood, the traveller has to pass through a valley of no very picturesque character, and what scenery there is, is in a great measure shut out from his view by high hedges on either side. The road by a most devious course, with many an abrupt turn and sharp angle, and frequently crossing and recrossing the direct line of ascent, at last conducts him to the summit, unprepared by any previous intimation for the sublime view which is to meet him there, and which, in consequence, bursts suddenly upon him with a startling and overpowering effect.

As we slowly wound our way by this steep and circuitous route, I was anticipating the effect which the scenery would have upon Fanny. When we arrived at the top her eyes lighted up, and her countenance was one glow of animation as she exclaimed, "This is, indeed, magnificent, surpassing anything I could have conceived!" And magnificent in truth it was. We stood on a pinnacle of the hill. On our right were cliffs of stupendous height, and yet beyond might be seen others still towering above them, and casting their gigantic shadows over the valley below. On our left, at the distance of perhaps a mile and a half, was a range of low hills, covered with a forest of pine-trees, rising one above another in regular gradation; in the midst of which were visible the steeple and part of the roof of a small church, looking as if unsupported and floating in the air. Beneath was a scattered village with its neat little flower-gardens and lawns, easily distinguished through our telescope. A fast-running stream, meandering through the valley, had in

one place overflowed its banks, and was expatiating over rich and verdant meadows; and there its still waters seemed to linger in soft and sweet repose, as if reluctant to pursue their destined course, and to be lost in the abyss of the ocean; whilst a few miles distant from us in front, but yet distinctly visible, was the dark expanse of the ocean itself, to which this petty stream was paying its unwilling contribution; as the years of one's own life, whether we will or no, are fast gliding away into the regions of eternity.

All at once, as if to heighten the romance of the scene, the bells of the church beneath us gave forth a sweet and solemn peal, recalling to my mind the beautiful lines of Cowper:—

How soft the music of those village bells,
Falling at intervals upon the ear
In cadence sweet, now dying all away—
Now pealing loud again, and louder still,
Clear and sonorous, as the gale comes on !
With easy force it opens all the cells
Where mem'ry slept. Wherever I have heard
A kindred melody, the scene recurs,
And with it all its pleasures and its pains.

We seemed to be on enchanted ground, and to have been ourselves touched by the wizard's wand, for none either moved or spoke. The sounds ceased: and one might have imagined the garden of Eden, ere living thing had entered there,—so lovely was the scene, and withal so silent.

And to me it appeared but another change in the magic drama, and in keeping with it all, when I heard the sweet tones of Fanny Cranstoun's voice,—“Oh! how beautiful! how inexpressibly grand!”

The scene had, indeed, awakened all the deeper feelings

of her soul, and had brought into unison with its own grandeur and solemnity the chastened and graver thoughts of her lively and playful mind. How much longer she would have remained gazing upon it, I cannot say; but I was obliged reluctantly to hint that it was growing late, and that we had seven miles to ride.

Then, taking a last long look, and sinking the summit of the hill, we set out on our return to Beechwood, leaving behind us, but indelibly impressed upon the memory, the prospect we had been contemplating.

We hastened home, conversing on what we had seen. And Fanny Cranstoun's remarks upon it, and on subjects suggested by it, proved to me that whilst, at other times, and on lighter matters, her conversation was gay and fascinating in the extreme, her sentiments on more serious occasions were full of all that was noble and exalted.

We had just entered on a narrow part of the road about two miles from Beechwood, where there was barely room for a single horseman and the smallest vehicle to pass each other, and that only with the utmost caution both of the rider and the driver, when I saw to my dismay a cart coming towards us at great speed with no one in it. There was no time to deliberate. I instantly called out to the ladies to turn and gallop back until they should meet with some opening, through which they might escape into the fields. To do this was but the work of a moment; whilst I kept behind, and with my whip and voice so balked the horse, that going too near the side of the road, he and the cart were precipitated into the ditch. We then rode on at a smart pace, in order to send persons to extricate the poor animal from his uncomfortable position. On arriving within a short distance of the lodge leading into the park, we found

a boy of about fourteen years of age lying on the ground with his leg broken, groaning heavily. Fanny Cranstoun immediately dismounted, and was kneeling beside him in a moment, while Jane hastened forward for assistance.

The little sufferer was speedily conveyed to the porter's lodge, and a surgeon sent for.

Fanny, now that all had been done which woman's kindness of heart could suggest, or her gentle hands administer, gave vent to the overflowing of her feelings in a flood of tears. I did not attempt to interrupt this natural burst of grief at the sufferings she had witnessed, but offering her my arm conducted her to the house in silence. She said not a word as we parted at the hall-steps, but the warm pressure of her hand proved to me how sincerely she felt my consideration and attention.

On the following morning I walked over to his little retired residence to pay my respects to my old tutor, Mr. Waldy. I had heard from my father that his visits to him had of late been less frequent, and that he left home for several hours daily, whereas formerly he seldom quitted his own premises, unless to call at the cottage, or on some mission of charity and kindness. I had called before, but had not seen him.

When I arrived he was again out; but, being expected to return almost immediately, I determined to wait for him, and was shown into his study. I went to the well-filled shelves, and amused myself with looking over some of the books. I had been in the room about half an hour, when my attention was attracted by a small china vase; and on going near to examine it, what was my astonishment to see lying within it my dear mother's ring, which the reader is aware the gipsy had stolen from me. I took it up and

examined it; yes, true enough, it was the same identical ring. After various reflections and suppositions, I came to the conclusion that the gipsy had sold it to some wandering Jew, and that Mr. Waldy must have bought it of him. But why should he buy a ring, and a lady's ring too? And I was again at a fault. Then I remembered that he was now continually from home, and he might be going to be married, and had bought it for his intended; but this did not satisfy me.

Whilst I was thus engaged with anything but pleasing reflections, Mr. Waldy walked into the room. Seeing the ring in my hand, he became much agitated and greatly displeased, and desired me to give it to him, which I did immediately. He then opened his desk and placed it in a small drawer, and again turning the lock, deliberately put the key into his pocket. I had intended telling him that it was the ring I had lost, but his manner deterred me; and besides, I thought it might lead to a discovery of my secret.

"And must my sorrows be thus intruded on?" he said, with a voice trembling with emotion. "Cannot I even here be permitted to drag on the miserable remainder of a miserable life, without some strange eye to spy it out, and to add to its wretchedness?"

Then fixing on me a stern and piercing look, he continued, "Is this, sir, worthy the son of your father, the son of your mother, whose forbearance and sympathy and friendship have been to me the only earthly source of consolation for many a weary year, the only help which man could give to lighten my heavy burden? Herbert, you are privy to something more about that ring than merely seeing it now for the first time—your manner, your look, assure me of it."

He paused for a moment, and I heard him muttering to himself, "Do they then know each other so well? Has there been such insincerity and baseness, and I been so deceived?—Ah! and what then may not be known?" and he placed his hand upon his forehead, as if his head were bursting, and threw himself into a chair.

"Oh, Herbert!" he exclaimed, "at least I have not deserved it at your hands, that you should hunt out my sin and my shame."

I was greatly affected. "My dear sir," I said, endeavouring to soothe and to undeceive him, "you have ever been to me the kindest of friends, and I have ever felt for you the utmost regard and respect; how then should I willingly, much less wilfully, pain and distress you? Be assured that I am privy to nothing which could lessen the esteem and affection which are so justly your due, and would not believe anything were I to hear it."

He raised his head, and his manner and his look were changed. "Yes, Herbert," he said, "you are still your mother's child; still the same kind, amiable, affectionate boy I have always found you to be. I see it all now. Oh, how true it is that 'wickedness, condemned by her own witness, always forecasteth grievous things!'"

He then rose up from his chair, and, having taken two or three turns about the room in deep and troubled thought, came up to me, and laying his hand upon my arm, and looking me steadily in the face, said in a low and hollow voice, slowly and deliberately, "Herbert—I have been a sinner, and have caused another to sin,—and she has paid the penalty by death; and I, by being allowed to live on with a guilty conscience, and with a broken heart."

Then suddenly resuming his sternness of look and manner, he said,

"Never let what has passed cross your lips. Silence, sir; be silent on the subject. I have been forced to this confession, sir, because I have my suspicions that you are about to add to my bitterness; but beware, sir, for I watch you."

I was at first struck dumb with amazement, and on being sufficiently recovered to speak was about to say something, when he abruptly stopped me—"Not a word, sir, now; your future conduct alone can vindicate your character, and will, I trust, remove my suspicions; and now, sir, adieu."

Saying which he hastily passed into an adjoining room; the key turned in the lock; and the next moment I heard the groanings of a broken and contrite spirit, and a soul communing with its God. I then left the house, and slowly and mournfully returned home, utterly confounded by what I had heard.

CHAPTER VIII.

"How time has flown away, and only a fortnight more remains of my leave of absence," said I, half aloud to myself, as I sauntered along by the banks of the trout-stream, which wound its way through the park; "and how differently has my time been passed from what I had anticipated! How vastly changed are my thoughts and my ideas, from what they were but a few short weeks ago! Do not my wishes and desires run in a new current? Have I not admitted into my bosom the seeds of envy and discontent? Yes; I cannot deny it. And what has caused this change?" I was com-

pelled to answer—"Fanny; yes, wicked, cruel Fanny, you have caused all this."

The time had certainly passed away most pleasantly. I had seen a great deal of Fanny Cranstoun, for I had been a frequent guest at Beechwood Lodge, and had often accompanied her and my sister in their rides. I had also occasionally met her by accident when on horseback, attended only by a groom. Let not the reader smile as if it were anything but accident which came so kindly to my aid. The more I saw of her, the more I was convinced that I ought to see her no more. "Oh that I had the prospects of former years!" I would say to myself with a sigh; "or that Fanny were as poor as myself!" But nobler sentiments would immediately banish the unworthy feelings from my heart. "Will she miss me when I am gone?" was a question I often put to myself, but could give myself no satisfactory reply. Mr. Dastard had not, of late, I thought, paid her so much attention as formerly, and was frequently seen walking alone with her elder sister. He had latterly shown me more civility; but it seemed tacitly understood that the less we had to say to each other the better. I had taken a dislike to him from the first day we met, and the thought that he was a suitor for the hand of Fanny maddened me; for it never occurred to me for a moment that his offer of £10,000 a year would be rejected. Had I thought this possible, it might perhaps have afforded me some relief.

"What am I thinking of?" I said aloud, as I hastened my steps; "I am but a poor clerk, without a sixpence. Oh, Fanny, would that I had never seen you!"

Just then, I perceived my sister coming towards me; and, rousing myself from my melancholy mood, I went to meet her with as cheerful a countenance as I could assume.

"Here is a letter for you, Herbert, from grandmamma. I am sure it must be an invitation to go and stay with her for some short time before you return to London; and if so, you cannot refuse."

"Why, dearest Jane, should you suppose me reluctant to pay her a visit, when she has always been so kind to me?"

"Why, really, Herbert, I hardly know; but something seemed to tell me that you would not look upon it in so welcome a manner as you used to do."

I turned away my head, for I felt the blood mounting to my cheeks; and breaking the seal, I ran my eyes hastily over the contents of the note.

"You are quite right, Jane, in your conjecture; for my grandmother wishes me to go to her for a couple of days, in my way to London."

"That, dear Herbert, is better news than I expected; and is owing, I am sure, to dear grandmamma's kind consideration of us all. I really began to fear that you were about to leave us very soon."

"The very longest must be very soon," I said with a sigh.

"It seems but yesterday that you came to us, my dear brother; and now six weeks have passed away."

"Yes, Jane; time flies swiftly when in the society of those we love."

As I spoke, horse's hoofs were heard on the road at some distance from us; and, looking in the direction whence the sound came, I saw Fanny Cranstoun and Mr. Dastard riding by, attended by a groom some paces behind. A coldness crept over me, and a feeling not to be understood but by those who have experienced it. I followed her with my eyes for some time, until a turn in the road concealed her from my view.

"What a beautiful horsewoman Fanny is," said my sister; "and such a beautiful, amiable girl in every way! The more I see of her, the more I am attached to her."

"They are a very pleasing family altogether," I replied, aiming to make my own observations general, and leaving the particular denouement to my sister.

"Mr. Dastard is more amiable than he was; though it is his ten thousand a year which makes him a welcome suitor at Beechwood; are you not of the same opinion, Herbert?"

"I think *amiable* a wrong term in his case, Jane; though certainly he has been rather civil, in fact, very civil to me lately: what his motive may be, I cannot tell; but I have no doubt there is something selfish and sinister at the bottom of it. As to your other remark, I must say that ten thousand a year has great weight with young ladies."

"I hope you do not class me among the number, Herbert; for I assure you that if I did not like a person, double the sum would not influence me."

"But consider, Jane, what good you might do with the money."

"No," she replied, with warmth; "no money could turn to any good which had been acquired by perjury myself at the altar, in the presence of God. How could I stand there, and solemnly vow to love a person whom I well knew all the time that I did not, and could not."

"But, dearest Jane, there are many different interpretations of that word love."

"Only one, however, when taken in reference to an union for life—that all-engrossing affection for another full of purity and innocent fondness. No, Herbert, marry a person only with feelings of gratitude and esteem, or who loves you only in the same degree, and you are miserable for ever."

"I admire and honour your feelings, my dearest sister," said I, taking her arm within mine; "but I fear there are not many girls who are influenced by such proper sentiments."

"Our small village, then, is singularly fortunate at this moment, for I could point you out another with feelings congenial to my own."

"Indeed! and who may that be?"

"It surely cannot take you very long to guess—you saw her only a minute ago."

"And do you, then, really think that she does not love Mr. Dastard?"

"No, certainly not; have you not been able to discover that yet? And I am sure she has too much proper feeling to marry him from worldly considerations, and too much spirit to do so by compulsion. I think, however, that I know one who loves, or imagines she loves him."

I looked astonishment, but said nothing.

"I am almost certain," resumed my sister, "that Miss Cranstoun is strongly disposed to become Mrs. Dastard."

"I do not consider her a very sensible person," I observed.

"I do not think that she is at all deficient," replied Jane; "but she has not been a favourite, and consequently has been kept rather in the background. She certainly has not the talent or agreeable manners of her younger sister; nor has she had the same advantages. There is always a restraint upon her when in society; but I have seen her alone in her own room, and there she is as different as possible."

"And do you really think that she wishes to captivate Mr. Dastard?" said I, hoping within myself that she might succeed.

"I do, indeed, think that she wishes to marry him, Herbert; but it is not easy to appreciate properly the circumstances of her position, nor consequently to do her justice. As I said just now, a stranger can form no idea at all of her character and acquirements. She never appears at her ease before Mr. Cranstoun or her mother, and I have reason to know that, although the eldest, she has always been treated as a younger daughter; whilst Fanny has been allowed many indulgences which have been denied to herself. And certainly Fanny is more formed to be an ornament to society in every way. Nor has she been in the slightest degree spoiled by over indulgence, or by the obvious superiority of her accomplishments."

"You do not think, Jane, that Miss Cranstoun is influenced in what she is doing by a desire of triumphing over her sister?"

"By no means, Herbert, for nothing can exceed their affection for each other. I think she sees that Fanny does not care for Mr. Dastard, and he has been paying her as much attention lately, as he before did to Fanny."

"Vain, boasting, impudent fop!" I exclaimed, in indignation, "who thinks that, being a great man with ten thousand a year, he may transfer his affections from one to another, with the certainty of finding acceptance, and fresh food for his vanity."

As I was speaking, Henry Cranstoun came in sight, with his fishing-rod in his hand, and I fancied I saw a blush on my sister's cheek, when, striking his rod into the ground, he came towards us.

"What a contrast to Mr. Dastard!" thought I, as I watched his approach, his open and manly countenance indicating a noble and generous disposition.

"I fear you have not been very successful, Mr. Cranstoun," said my sister, "if I may judge by the bag on your servant's shoulder."

"No, Miss Anneslie, I am not a very skilful troller; partly, I believe, from my not being very partial to such awkward angling. Fly-fishing I am very fond of, and in that, perhaps, I might be a match for your brother."

"I have caught many a fine fish where your rod is now," said I.

"Then do go and try your luck again, for I have caught only one to-day, and that I have had the pleasure of sending to Miss Anneslie."

"I am sure Miss Anneslie is very much obliged to you," replied my sister.

I then left them to a *tête-à-tête* conversation for a short time, whilst I went to try my skill with the rod. But this time I was doomed to a disappointment I did not anticipate; and after half an hour's vain attempt, gave it up in despair, and rejoined my sister and Henry Cranstoun.

"Herbert," said the former, "Mrs. Cranstoun intends to give a dance to our villagers."

"And to the tenantry and respectable tradespersons," added Henry Cranstoun. "What do you think, Mr. Anneslie, of the hopping capabilities of the good folks?"

"Why," said I, "they will have no objection to try, I dare say; and, with a little practice beforehand, will be able to cut some capers, if not in the most fashionable mode."

"They will enjoy themselves, I have no doubt," said my sister; "when do you mean to give the entertainment, and where?"

"That is a question, Miss Anneslie, in which you and your brother will be of great assistance to us; as well as by

naming the persons to whom the invitations are to be sent. But here comes my mother, who will be able to tell you more about it."

Mrs. Cranstoun coming up, confirmed her son's announcement; adding, that she required the aid of my sister and myself, to send out the notes. "And I also intend, Miss Anneslie, to give your school-children a dinner."

"Oh, thank you, Mrs. Cranstoun; that will indeed delight me."

"You and your brother had better come and dine with us this evening, and then we can talk over the arrangements," continued Mrs. Cranstoun.

We readily accepted the invitation, and marched off at a quick pace to prepare for dinner.

CHAPTER IX.

IN those days, as in the present, he who would be a candidate for parliamentary honours, had need become very courteous and complaisant on the eve of an election. The sudden change which the aspirant for popular favour experiences, is indeed surprising. For whereas, but a few days ago, he would scarce have borne it well, that the cultivator of the soil, or the proprietor of the loom, or he who advances from behind the counter, should have come "betwixt the wind and his nobility," he is now hand and glove with every one to whom a scanty patch of ground, or the occupation of a crazy tenement, gives a vote for the county or the borough, takes a lively interest in all which concerns his welfare, and is grown at once marvellously careful and inquisitive about Mrs. and the little family. He

speaks with the quiet air of the most disinterested patriotism; affects indifference to honours and distinction; but, having such and such views, he humbly conceives he may be of service to his country, and is willing to sacrifice his own ease and inclinations for the public weal. He then asks permission to pay his respects to the lady of the house, who, in full expectancy, is waiting all ready to receive him in the best parlour, with her children in their best attire. From these he selects the fairest, and swears he should have known whose child she was, by the dimple in her cheek, had he met her among a thousand; that he never did see the like to any of them for sweet faces and pretty frocks; and that, as for that youngest boy yonder, he has all his father in his eye. The triumph is complete. The husband might as well throw up his farm at once, or break his looms, or shut up his shop, as not give his vote to a gentleman so genteel and so discerning. Many a vote and many an election has been lost through not paying due devoirs to the female branches of the establishment; or from having paid indiscreet attention to one pretty woman, to the disparagement and awakened jealousy of the plainer wives and daughters of some fifty of her neighbours.

What is required of a canvasser of a county, or a borough on a more extensive stage, must every one who hunts for popularity do within that smaller circle where he is to act his part. It was this which made it so difficult to say who were, and who were not to be invited to this ball of Mrs. Cranstoun.

"It is hopeless to please all," she observed; "we must endeavour to displease as few as possible."

"The tenantry, with their wives and daughters," resumed Mrs. Cranstoun, "amount to twenty, I suppose. They, of

course, will have the upper part of the room where my daughters will be."

"Where we shall be,—but not expected to dance, I hope," said Miss Cranstoun.

"That will be just as you please," replied her mamma, "though I hope that observation was not made from a feeling of false pride."

"Oh! mamma! how can you suppose that we can dance with those short, fat, vulgar Miss Toogoods?"

"I am sorry to see you so disposed, my dear; you are raising difficulties instead of assisting us. When the time comes, it will be for you to go or not, as you choose; but if you do not go with the desire of pleasing every one, you had better remain away, for it will be just the circumstance to cause general dissatisfaction, and to mar all we are doing." Then turning to me, "How many of the tradespeople have you on your list, Mr. Anneslie?"

"I have the names of about forty, but I am not sure that these are all."

"I wish you would tell me the leading persons among them, Mr. Anneslie, and what you know of their characters."

"Well then, there is Mr. Absolute, the grocer, as proud and conceited as possible; and Mr. Curricke, the carpenter, not always so sober as he should be; Mr. Founder, the blacksmith, who sings so loud in church; and Mr. Needle, the tailor, with his three daughters."

At length, after much trouble, the invitations were sent out; and, perhaps not strange to say, were all accepted.

Never was the village in such a stir, bustle, and confusion, as on the day of receiving the notes. Only four answers were returned by the bearer. What were they to do?

"I had hoped, Herbert," he said, as we were alone in the garden, "that your coming of age would have been celebrated in this manner, as heir to this estate. But His will be done! and thankful ought we to be that our misfortunes have at least made us acquainted with so pleasing a family."

I said nothing; and right glad was I to see my sister coming towards us with a note in her hand, for I was afraid that my father might not have confined himself to a general mention of the name of Cranstoun, but have proceeded to individualize them, to my inexpressible confusion.

The note contained an invitation to luncheon at the Lodge. My father preferred remaining at home, as he had some letters to write. Not so my sister and myself.

"I do not remember ever seeing the place look so gay and happy as it does to-day," I observed to Fanny Cranstoun, as we rode side by side after luncheon, "for every face is beaming with joy and gratitude."

"I expect great amusement this evening," she replied: "you must be near me, and point out all the different people."

"I shall be only too happy, Miss Cranstoun."

"And I will reward you for your trouble by imposing another task."

"Which can be no other than a privilege and a pleasure."

"Well then, it is to dance with me the first quadrille this evening; for we have arranged that my brother should secure your sister as a partner, and Mr. Dastard is to dance with Emma; so that you must take compassion on me."

"A most delightful task, certainly," I replied.

"And now for one more, Mr. Anneslie. I want you to contrive, by some means or other, to place the fat Miss Too-good *vis-d-vis* to my sister."

"I am afraid that my slight acquaintance with your sister will hardly warrant my taking such a liberty."

"Of course, it must appear to be the result of mere chance. I will take care that you shall not be supposed in the least concerned in any settled scheme in this matter. We must have a fourth, and as you are to be M. C., you can easily make the arrangement unsuspected."

"I will certainly do my best, Miss Cranstoun, to aid you in your little work of mischief," I said, laughing; "but you must pardon me if I fail, for I must be dependent on circumstances at the time."

"I am the last person, Mr. Anneslie, to desire really to annoy my sister; and had I such purpose, you are the last person to whom I should apply to put it into execution; for sure am I that Mr. Anneslie is incapable of anything unkind or uncourteous."

I inclined my head to my saddle-bow, in acknowledgment of the compliment.

"No," she answered, "it is no compliment, but a debt which I owed you, for leading you very naturally to suspect that I had towards my sister some rather unsisterly intentions. And yet I should so like to see her pride a little mortified, as well as Mr. Dastard's."

"Is Miss Cranstoun quite sure that she has no other motive for this innocent attack upon Mr. Dastard?" I asked, almost in a whisper.

"None at all, I assure you, Mr. Anneslie," she answered, in a low and slightly hesitating voice, whilst her face became almost scarlet.

At this moment Henry Cranstoun and my sister, who had

been riding some paces behind, joined us, and the conversation became general.

Seven o'clock was the hour appointed for the company to meet. The dance was to take place in a new barn, which had just been completed, and which had been prettily decorated with evergreens and flowers, and with a chalked floor, in imitation of the Cranstoun arms. Mrs. Cranstoun, who had determined that the assembly should be received with all courtesy—a part which she knew so well how to perform with grace and elegance—was the first who entered the room, with her daughters. I accompanied them as master of the ceremonies.

We had been there but a few minutes, when a rumbling noise was heard at the door, as of a light cart, and the footman entering, announced Mrs. and the Miss Toogoods. At the same moment appeared four figures, a perfect blaze of light, dressed in bright scarlet from top to toe. They seemed to have selected the colour, as being most in keeping with the full-blown roses which were blushing in their cheeks; they were manifestly in florid health. Mrs. Cranstoun advanced halfway to meet them, and Mrs. Toogood extending her hand, a cordial shake ensued, an honour which the Miss Toogoods determined should not be monopolized by their mother.

“My daughters,” said Mrs. Cranstoun, when, much to the annoyance of the eldest, but to the great delight of Fanny, the ceremony of shaking hands was repeated.

“And are these really your daughters, ma'am?” exclaimed Mrs. Toogood, eyeing the young ladies. “Susan, my dear,” then, suddenly checking herself as that damsel advanced, “No, you are not so tall as Miss Cranstoun. My lady ——”

Fortunately the entrance of more company came to Mrs. Cranstoun's relief. Poor Miss Cranstoun looked the very picture of misery, while Fanny cast many a smiling glance at me, every one of which made terrible havoc with my already wounded heart.

At length the tenantry had assembled, and ranged themselves in due order of precedence at the upper end of the room. To describe or comment on them individually would be but wearisome to my readers, and occasion my poor tale to drag its slow length along. Suffice it to say that they were the blunt, honest, John Bull farmers peculiar to the age, or, at least, to the parish and vicinity of Beechwood, where the master held the plough, the son drove the team, the daughters milked the cows, and the mother made the butter.

Mr. Absolute, the grocer, and Mr. Founder, the blacksmith, are the only two worthy of particular notice. The former made a most ludicrous entry, such as to excite a smile even in Miss Cranstoun, engaged as she was in conversation with Mr. Dastard, of whom she appeared to have taken violent possession. He was dressed in a very tight pair of the then fashionable pantaloons, buttoned close above the ankle, with a flaw scarcely perceptible on the right knee. These pantaloons, as the village annals tell, had once graced the portly person of Mr. Cranstoun, and were by him given to his valet. The valet disposed of them to Mr. Moses, and Mr. Moses to a young farmer in an adjoining parish about to be married. The latter, having damaged them at the knee, parted with them for a small consideration to Mr. Needle, the tailor, who, having with inimitable skill finedrawn the rent, sold them to Mr. Absolute, the grocer, to be worn by him at Mrs.

Cranstoun's ball. So that they could boast of almost an equal number of possessors with the far-famed sceptre of Agamemnon. On receiving a curtesy from Mrs. Cranstoun, Mr. Absolute thrust out his hand ; but, as she was extending hers, hastily drew it back again, and continued bowing and scraping for several seconds.

The best-dressed person in the room was Mr. Founder, the blacksmith, a young man of a very modest and retiring demeanour ; who, having some little property of his own, and being no further engaged in the smithy than to superintend his workmen, would have been considered not greatly presuming had he aspired to the hand of one of the farmer's daughters. He formed a pleasing contrast to the majority of the company.

At last, as master of the ceremonies, I proposed to open the ball with a quadrille, the guests generally not having yet acquired sufficient courage to begin the country dances before such great folks. Fortunately, the arrangement enjoined upon me by Fanny needed not my contrivance ; for Mr. Founder, leading up the fat Miss Toogood, the parties took their places opposite to Miss Cranstoun and Mr. Dastard, whose annoyance and chagrin were as complete as could be desired. And, bating that Miss Toogood appeared to consider the art of dancing to consist in the height to which she sprang, and the weight with which she descended, there could scarcely have been a better conducted quadrille.

The next was a country dance, in which several more couples joined, Henry Cranstoun leading off with one of the Miss Toogoods, to the evident mortification of her two sisters. Just before it began, Mr. Founder civilly asked the honour of dancing with Miss Cranstoun ; but that young lady turned away without deigning an answer. Poor Mr. Founder ! I

shall never forget the look of bitter and unmerited disappointment depicted in his countenance, as all eyes were turned upon him. And as little shall I ever forget the conduct of Fanny. She was standing near me at the time, and had seen the whole transaction. Immediately stepping forward, she said, in a goodnatured manner, with one of her own pleasing smiles, "Mr. Founder, if my sister is not equal to the exertions of a country dance this evening, I shall be most happy to become her substitute." A tear of gratitude started to his eye, and, as he led her to the dance, a hum of applause resounded through the room. The whole was but the circumstance of a moment, but it will never pass away from the memory of those who witnessed it. I looked on with admiration and love, heightened by this amiable proof of the goodness of her heart; and to be her slave for life was, at that moment, the summit of my desire and ambition.

When this dance was over, Mrs. Cranstoun retired with her daughters, amidst loud shouts of "Long live my lady!" The country dances then commenced in good earnest, and were still more lively and noisy after supper. However, it went off on the whole very well indeed, and was long the talk of the village and the neighbourhood. The only alloy was a small fracas between Mr. Absolute, the grocer, and Mr. Curricke, the carpenter, who had a set-to towards morning, in which the former got a black eye, and slit his pantaloons in such a manner that Mr. Needle, the tailor, after due examination, declared them incapable of further service, and recommended that they should be superseded by a pair of military blue, which he had recently bought of the servant of a deceased half-pay officer, and could sell cheap.

CHAPTER X.

It was a bright starry evening, two days having elapsed since the fête mentioned in the last chapter, when, lighting my cheroot after dinner, I strolled down to the cottage, to inquire after the poor boy who had broken his leg, as related in a former part of this little work, and whose other injuries were of a more serious character than had at first been apprehended. Nothing could have exceeded the kindness of Fanny towards him. Not a day had passed without her having called to see him, always bringing with her something nourishing from the well-spread table at the Lodge.

"In fact," I said to myself, "every action of her life displays that sweetness of disposition and amiability of character which so elevate her above her sister, and must ever attract the highest admiration of all with whom she may become acquainted. She cannot fail to captivate, also, by her striking personal appearance and accomplishments, her easy and graceful manners, and that agreeable affability, rendered still more engaging by her evident unconsciousness of the homage which she is receiving." I could not help often looking into the future as respected her and myself. I could not help viewing her as followed by the noble, the fashionable, and the wealthy, upon her entrance into the busy world of pleasure and gaiety, and reflecting what effect such education might have upon her. "Will she be the same that she now is, after all the bewilderments and temptations of a London season?" Something within me answered, "Yes, she will be the same; her imagination may be dazzled for the moment by all this, but her sound understanding and her high principle will never be greatly

led astray. Her heart may be entangled, ere she have time to think, in the toils which will be spread around her, but it will ever be the same in the retired and secluded recesses of her chamber.

When anticipating, in imagination, her future career, and contrasting it with my own, did I desire it less brilliant, or secretly wish that it more resembled mine? No; let the reader believe me when I say I did not. My love then appeared to me too sincere and exalted for selfishness. I fancied that I had schooled myself into such a disciplined frame of mind, that, to view her happiness from a distance, to hear that she was the gayest of the gay, the most admired of her sex, provided only that she was still unchanged, was all the satisfaction I desired. Yet how often did I indeed wish that my position now were what it once was, for then I could have offered her every comfort and gratification, together with a fond and devoted heart—or else, that we had never met.

Mr. Dastard's conduct puzzled me more and more every day. I plainly saw, from the first, that he was a suitor at Beechwood Lodge, and that Fanny was the object of his tender regard. That it was mutual, I had my reasons for doubting. His recent attentions to the elder sister, I perceived, had not given Mr. or Mrs. Cranstoun satisfaction, yet he continued them. What can be his object? I thought to myself. Is it to create a feeling of jealousy in the mind of Fanny? If so, he has certainly not succeeded; and a momentary sensation of pride and gratification would rise up within me, as my thoughts suggested this. Then, again, why is she so indifferent towards him? Have I her affections? No, I have no reason for supposing it; and if I had, ought I not immediately to leave, and to see her no

more? My sentiments of honourable conduct prompted me to this step; and, had I entertained a serious thought that her happiness was in the slightest degree dependant upon it, I should have taken it. I had resolution to have done for her what I had not resolution to do for myself. My own future peace of mind I knew to be at stake, but I silenced the conviction—"it is only another short week, and I shall be gone."

"Miss Fanny has not been here to-day," said the old woman, as I entered the cottage; "perhaps, sir, you can tell me the reason, for it is the first day she has missed for so many weeks. I hope she is not ill, sir?"

"No, my good woman," said I, "I hope not; and if she were, I think I should have heard of it. I dare say she has been busy."

"Oh! if she had been ill," answered the old woman, "your honour must have heard of it, for she seems to have taken a liking to your honour. She often talks about you and your family, and wishes you had not come by your bad fortune. She has a good heart, Master Herbert."

"But how is the poor boy?" I asked, wishing to change the subject, though far from being disagreeable to me.

"Oh! he is going on as well as possible, and will be well, come Christmas; though, I fear, never be the man he would have been. But he'll never want; Miss Fanny, dear soul, will look to that."

At this moment the door opened, and who should walk in but Fanny herself.

"Have you come alone, Miss Cranstoun?" I said, after my surprise was a little abated.

"Yes, Mr. Anneslie," she answered, equally surprised and confused at meeting me there. "It is such a very short

distance, and such a beautiful evening, that I thought I would just run down to inquire after my patient, for I heard at dinner from Mr. Dastard that he was not so well."

"Which I am happy to tell you, my dear Miss Cranstoun, is not the case."

"I am delighted to hear it," was her reply. And then taking out some jelly from her basket, she approached the bed on which the boy was lying, and gave him some with her own hands.

"He often talks about you, Miss," said the old woman, "and is very thankful for your kindness; but when you are here, he is so shy that he will not speak a word."

"But we had a long conversation together yesterday. I think it must be Mr. Anneslie who makes him so silent. However, I must not be talking here, for already, perhaps, there is a hue and cry after me. Good night, my good woman. Good night, Mr. Anneslie." And so saying, she skipped out of the room. I was by her side in an instant. "Do allow me, Miss Cranstoun, the pleasure of seeing you safe to your own door," I said, offering her my arm.

"There is nothing to fear, Mr. Anneslie," she replied, "and it is such a short distance, and so light, that I am not at all afraid. But as you kindly offer it, it would be ungracious in me not to accept your safe conduct."

Our position was a singular one; and perhaps I may not be wrong in supposing that Fanny was slightly uneasy at the thought of walking alone with me at that time of the night, when it was not even known that she had left the house. She was silent, and so was I; but from far different feelings. This, thought I, will be our last walk; until—when?—for ever! and a resolution instantly rushed to my mind of making this my last interview with Fanny. This

shall be the last happy moment, the remembrance of which shall console me hereafter. I have been drawn along, as it were, by the force of an impetuous current; and I must make one vigorous effort to escape; and that without delay. Under the impulse of this determination, I asked her how long they intended to remain at Beechwood.

"About two months longer, I think, Mr. Anneslie."

"How often, Miss Cranstoun, will the recollection of these few happy weeks recur to my memory, when I shall be far away! And yet I ought to forget them as soon as possible."

"But you are not leaving us yet, Mr. Anneslie?" she answered, in rather an anxious tone of voice.

"To-morrow morning, Miss Cranstoun," I returned, with as much calmness as I could assume.

I fancied that there was some agitation in her manner, as she said—

"Why this sudden determination, Mr. Anneslie? You must remain for Henry's birthday. He comes of age within these few days, and we intend giving an entertainment to the more aristocratic department of our neighbourhood. The village fête, the other day, was in anticipation of the event, my brother not knowing how long he might remain here. But possibly," and she hesitated, "it might be painful to your feelings."

"No, my dear Miss Cranstoun, I cannot be too thankful that this estate has fallen into the possession of those whom I so much esteem and respect, and whose kindness and amiable qualities I can never forget."

At this moment I perceived a figure dart across our path; but not so quickly but that I could discover Mr. Dastard before he had concealed himself in the shrubbery. It escaped the notice of Fanny, and I determined that, should

he not come forward, she should remain ignorant of his presence.

On our reaching the hall-steps, she said, smiling, "You will promise me to remain, Mr. Anneslie? if not, I shall desire Henry to use his influence with you."

"Do you think, my dear Miss Cranstoun, that I can refuse you any request? I am but too happy in the idea that my presence can in any degree add to your gratification."

Then gently raising her snowy hand, I pressed it to my lips. She permitted it to linger for a moment, and softly and silently withdrawing it, entered the hall; whilst I rushed away, astonished at my own presumption, yet delighted that it had given no offence. With the most lively emotions I retraced my steps to our little cottage, continually saying to myself, "What resolution is so strong, that the charming influence of woman cannot overcome it?"

CHAPTER XI.

ON the following morning, Lord Clydesdale's hounds met at Beechwood Lodge, in compliment to Mr. and Mrs. Cranstoun. "A southerly wind and a cloudy sky proclaim it a hunting morning," I hummed, as I rode into the park, where a number of horsemen had already assembled. It was a favourite meet, and was sure to attract red coats, and occasionally a black coat too, from many a distant home, and even to allure them from other hunts. The foaming hack, the splashed boots, and the spattered dress distinguishing these far-coming horsemen from those whose dwellings were contiguous to Beechwood. The intermixture of the Nimrods

was striking, as also of their steeds—from Lord Clydesdale, down to the daily postman; from the high-mettled racer, almost down to the last stage of his being “sold for the hounds.”

Mrs. Cranstoun gave a public breakfast that morning, of which however not many availed themselves, for the family were still almost strangers in the neighbourhood. When I entered the room, Fanny was dressed in her riding-habit, her long curls neatly braided on each side of her face. It became her remarkably well, and I do not think I ever saw her look more fascinating, as, gracefully resting against the back of an Elizabethan chair, she engaged in conversation with the accomplished Lord Clydesdale. I made a low bow to her as I passed, and I thought that she coloured slightly as she returned it.

Lord Clydesdale assisted her to mount, and rode by her side to the place of meeting. He was the most influential man in the county, and possessed large estates in different parts of England. He had all that birth, and rank, and wealth, and high consequence could bestow, was much in the favour of his Prince, “a great man with his master, and honourable.” At the time that I saw him at Beechwood, he must have been fifty and something more, yet with all the vigour and vivacity of thirty; none could ride to hounds as he, and the stiffer the country, the more certain was he to lead. Lady Clydesdale was something more than a very pretty woman, she was a most affable and accomplished person. They were now residing at Atherstone Park, about eight miles from Beechwood, where they had not been until this season for several years.

Just before entering the crowd of horsemen, I saw Fanny turn her horse’s head round, and Lord Clydesdale, taking off

his hat, rode amongst his hounds; I touched my horse with the spur, and was by her side in a moment.

We were both silent for some time. At last I was the first to speak.

"They say that Lord Clydesdale is a most gentlemanly and pleasing person, does Miss Cranstoun subscribe to this opinion?"

"Certainly, Mr. Anneslie; he is one of the most so I have ever met with. I have known him now for some time, and can say that he is as obliging and goodnatured as he is high-born and high-bred. And I understand that he is quite a patron to the young men of the day, particularly if they sit a horse well, and are fond of hunting."

Mr. Dastard here rode by at full gallop, without deigning to turn his head; but I could see the wonted expression of his countenance. It was very easy for me to interpret this, and I considered whether I ought not to tell Fanny that we had been observed on the previous evening, of which I was sure she was not aware when I left her on the hall-steps. But she had always studiously avoided any conversation about him, and this made me hesitate to commence the subject. I thought I would introduce it by expressing a hope that she had taken no cold the night before.

"Not the slightest, Mr. Anneslie," she replied, stooping and patting her horse on the neck; "though papa declared, when I told him this morning what I had done, that it would have served me right if I had."

"Mr. Dastard," she resumed, after a pause, "was the only person aware that I had left the house, and appears by his own account to have acted as my guardian angel, though an unperceived one."

"Not unperceived by me," I answered.

"Did you see him, then?" she asked, rather surprised.

"Just at the turn of the road, as we were approaching the house, he was in the shrubbery."

"Indeed!" said Fanny, and turned away her head.

We then conversed on other subjects, and never had I so longed for a *find*, as I now did for a *blank*. But it was not so fated. A favourite old hound spoke—the next moment a view halloo was given—the fox crossed near to where we were—a minute more and the whole pack were in full cry. It was a grand sight as they wound their way up the steep ascent on the opposite side of the covert. Just in front of us was a flight of oak rails, and Mr. Dastard vainly endeavouring to force open a gate, which had been accidentally left locked. This was an opportunity not to be lost, both of displaying my own horsemanship before Fanny, and of showing to Mr. Dastard how to take a lock off a gate. So, bending low to my fair companion, with hat and hand lowered to my horse's flank, and wishing her a good morning, I just touched with the spur my impatient steed, and cleared the fence at a bound.

As our gallant foe faced the plain, I reined my horse in, satisfied with being *well-up*, though not just now among the first; reflecting that if we should run into the next vale, he would require all his wind to meet that *sobbing* ground, and to cross the brook, which was likely to prove a stopper to most of those who were now pressing on. The pace was terrific, and even before we reached the brook (for my anticipations were realized) had told severely. This formidable barrier at last appeared before us. The leading hound, with about twelve couple more at his heels, dashed in, and toiling up the opposite bank, again snuffled the breeze, and with heads up, and haunches down, and scent

high, pursued their devoted victim at a killing score, which had already proved to more than half the field that, to them at least, the sport of the day had been brought to its close.

Lord Clydesdale rode at the brook, and cleared it in fine style, four or five more following close after him, among them myself; and on we raced for about three miles, when the same stream, which winds round almost at right angles, again opposed our way. Again Lord Clydesdale charged it, but his horse being blown refused. As he was making a second attempt, I passed him, and once more being fortunate enough to be landed on the other side, I kept my place at the tail of the hounds, which were now in full view of the noble Renard, and fast running into him, jaded and exhausted, in the open.

Lord Clydesdale came up at the moment, and cutting off the brush, presented it to me, saying, "Here, my fine fellow, take this in remembrance of one of the best runs I have ever had." We then rode home together, when, discovering who I was, he asked kindly after my father, and as we parted, gave me an invitation to dine and sleep at Atherstone Park the following day, which I readily accepted. But who knoweth what a day may bring forth?

On arriving at home I found an invitation to dine that evening at the Lodge; whither, in much joy of heart, I accompanied my father and sister in the pony carriage.

When we entered, Fanny was in conversation with Mr. Dastard, in a remote corner of the drawing-room. The rest were in a group, listening to Henry Cranstoun's description of the day's sport, and I thought I heard my name mentioned before I came in. "Here is Herbert Anneslie," he exclaimed, as I made my appearance, "who will be able to tell us how the day terminated."

I related what had passed, not omitting the invitation I had received from Lord Clydesdale.

"Lord Clydesdale is a great friend to those he takes a liking to," said Mr. Cranstoun, "and I hope he may be so to you."

I was pleased at these words from him, for I had my suspicions that I was beginning to be regarded with no very friendly feeling, either by himself or Mrs. Cranstoun.

I then walked across the room to the place where Fanny was in conversation with Mr. Dastard. As I approached the latter raised his voice, and giving me one of his sneering looks, said, "The next time, Miss Cranstoun, that you take a moonlight walk with a young man, at late and improper hours, let it at least be in the company of a gentleman." He then abruptly walked away.

My blood boiled within me, and it was only the presence of ladies which prevented my striking him down on the spot. Dinner being just then announced, I offered my arm to Fanny, whose countenance betrayed the same emotion which was burning in my own breast, and conducted her into the next room. Immediately after the ladies had retired I feigned fatigue, and left the house. My first thought was to look for a friend in this extremity, and I was for a few minutes in perplexity, objections presenting themselves to all the persons whom I hastily ran over in my mind. At last I determined to have recourse to the village doctor. He was a young man lately come there, so that we were little acquainted, but there was a goodnatured openness in his countenance and manner which were very engaging, and what I had seen of him had much prepossessed me in his favour. And then he might act in a double capacity, if required. To him, therefore, I has-

tened my steps, and explained to him all the circumstances of the case.

"This is an awkward affair, Mr. Anneslie," he replied. "I have a great regard for honour, but at the same time a piece of lead is a very indigestible substance. I suppose you have pistols?"

"I have no pistols," I replied, "so must ask you to provide them, and to do all else which is required of a friend, such as I am sure you will be to me in this unpleasant affair."

"Certainly," he answered; "I feel for one so circumstanced. Trust your honour to me, Mr. Anneslie, and you shall not repent having done so."

It was then agreed that the doctor should go to Mr. Dastard the following morning before any one, excepting the servants, should be stirring, and should let me know the result immediately at the bridge, where I would be by sunrise. I then thanked him warmly for his kindness, and reached home before my father and sister returned from the Lodge. I retired at once to my room, and went to bed, as I expected they would pay me a visit; which they did.

As soon as they had left the room I got up again, and lit a candle, for my troubled thoughts would not allow me to sleep. The doubtful issue of the ensuing day oppressed me. I knew I was doing what, under the most favourable result, would occasion my father great pain, and what I myself abhorred, and in my conscience condemned; but the world and its prince told me there was nothing else to be done, and that my honour demanded the course I was taking, or a full, ample, and written apology, as the only alternative. I paced my room for some time in deep thought, nearly maddened by conflicting emotions.

Mr. Dastard had evidently been remonstrating with Fanny

on what he termed the impropriety of her conduct. And what right had he to do this unless they were betrothed, or under what other circumstances would she have brooked it for a moment? It was ignorance of these terms, on which they stood towards each other, that could alone justify the attentions I had shown her. But then these attentions had certainly not been displeasing to her, and this was quite at variance with the idea of her being engaged to Mr. Dastard. At last I determined to address her in a short note. The resolution made me easier, and I sat down, and wrote as follows :—

“MY DEAR MISS CRANSTOUN,

“The kindness which I have experienced from you during the short time that I have had the happiness to know you, will never be forgotten, and can never be repaid; may I venture to plead it as my excuse for writing to you these few lines. The freedom of Mr. Dastard’s manner and language towards yourself last night, infers a consideration, of the existence of which I was not until then aware. But nothing can justify the insult which I have received from him. I am wholly at a loss to conjecture a motive for his conduct; and to you, my dear Miss Cranstoun, I am sure I need enter into no vindication of the course which hard necessity compels me to pursue. If my presumption has made me feel too happy during the last few weeks, it will be amply atoned for by future suffering.

“Farewell! May every happiness be yours through life! And should you, in the midst of it all, have a passing thought to bestow, perhaps you will remember

“HERBERT ANNESLIE.

“Thursday morning,
4 o’clock, A.M.”

I then wrote to my father, Alas! what could I say? I was now in circumstances practically to carry out the teaching I had received from him—to act upon faith—to submit my own will to the will of God—to give proof whether I would trust to his wisdom, or follow my own devices: obey his law, or the impulses of my own pride: take my part with his people, or range myself on the side of the world. Alas! I was weighed, and found wanting. And no words can express the stings of an upbraiding conscience, when all I could find to say was but a condemnation of all I was doing—that I abhorred the vile practice of duelling—that I hoped it would be some comfort to him to know that I did not mean to add to my sin by attempting the life of a fellow-creature; and that I trusted the absence of all provocation on my part, and the gross insult I had received, might justify me in some degree for risking my own.

These letters I intended to give to my young friend, Mr. Howard, to be forwarded by him, as circumstances and his own discretion might direct, after the duel should have taken place.

But there was One higher than an earthly parent, to whom I was awfully accountable for the part I was now acting. I shall not dwell here on such a theme. Suffice it to say that I durst not plead before Him the wretched sophistry which had failed to administer balm to my own conscience. With the sinner's blind inconsistency, I entertained a vague hope of the mercy of my Judge, at the very moment that I was outraging his laws. I could neither rest, nor pray; but, taking up my hat, I softly stole down stairs with the utmost caution, unbarred and unbolted the outer door, and, although the day was not yet beginning to dawn, issued forth into the cold and chilly atmosphere of a November night, to keep my appointment at the bridge.

Arrived there, I paced to and fro with folded arms, sometimes pausing to listen to the falling of the waters over the cascade above, or to observe them with vacant eye, as they glided down through the arches. My thoughts went back to the happy days of childhood, to its careless and innocent pastimes, to my dear mother, with whom I had so often stood on this very spot, and who little thought that the child she so much loved, and so wisely instructed, and so sedulously endeavoured to train up in the faith and fear of God, was so soon to tread in the ways of sin, and to experience that greatest of sorrows—a remorseful conscience.

The day gradually dawned into a beautiful clear morning, more like one of those in the month of October, when the slight frost of the preceding night, yielding to the genial rays of the sun, is succeeded by a bright and agreeable noon. The earliest labourer, however, was not yet abroad; the little feathered inhabitants of the grove had not yet awakened: the only sounds which I heard, save the noise of the waterfall, were the occasional lowing of the distant herd, or the shrill crowing of the cock; the only living objects which I saw around me were “the moping owl” retiring to “her secret bower,” or the moor-hen, just peering out from her reedy dwelling, to see if the coast were clear.

How did my troubled thoughts contrast with the quiet scenery around me! I was about to commit a most wicked act, in sinful compliance with an unchristian custom of a Christian country. I was about to incur the displeasure of my father, and perhaps fill him with the deepest grief! and my sister too! And then I had parted for ever from her whom I so ardently loved, who had made me forget my difficulties and my sorrows, and who was betrothed—for so I

now felt assured—to the man who had always slighted me, and whose deliberate and unprovoked insult was the wanton occasion of all that I was now enduring. Next, my thoughts adverted to the uncertain issue of the duel; for who, not utterly lost to all sense of religion, can contemplate death in the very act of sin, without feelings of the deepest awe? I could not. Within an hour I might be out of the reach of repentance, with the twofold guilt of self-murder, and of having caused another to be stamped with the mark of Cain, an outcast of heaven.

“As I feared,” said the doctor, shaking me by the hand, “a meeting is unavoidable. I never saw so uncivil a fellow in my life. I have half a mind to have a shot at him myself, after you have done with him.”

“Cannot the meeting take place immediately?” I asked. “It will be far better than suspense.”

“We have thought it best to fix half-past four o’clock this afternoon, at the bottom of Elton Hill,” he replied.

We then parted, having settled to meet again at a short distance from the village, so as to ride together.

Three o’clock arrived, when, under the pretext that I was going to fulfil my engagement with Lord Clydesdale (how can there be anything but sin in the highway of sin?) I mounted my horse, and rode quietly on towards Elton Hill. As I passed within sight of Beechwood Lodge, I cast one long and eager look, in the hope of seeing Fanny walking in the park; but fancy, with all her imaginative powers, could call up nothing resembling her.

I had not been long at the appointed place, when the doctor came up in his gig.

“I think we had better drive,” said he; “I have told my

servant where to take your horse, and to wait till we come to him."

I then took my seat, and we proceeded at a quick pace.

On arriving within about half a mile of the ground selected for the duel, we alighted from the gig, and leaving it in charge of a boy, whom we happened to meet, advanced to the spot on foot. Mr. Dastard was there a short time before us. His friend was a person whom I remembered to have seen once or twice within the last few days. His face might once have been handsome; but dissipation was stamped on every feature, and he was evidently younger in years than in looks. Large whiskers and long mustaches added to the fierce and almost diabolical expression of his countenance. I wondered how Mr. Dastard could have become acquainted with him. He was introduced to me by the name of Jeffreys.

"Yes, Jeffreys," said the doctor, "Jeffreys; am I not right in the name, sir?"

He made a slight inclination of the head.

The ground was then marked out by the doctor, whose strides were of good measure, making the distance at least fifteen paces instead of twelve. Armed with the fiendish implements of death, we took our places opposite to each other. The signal was given. I heard the report of a pistol at the same moment that I was firing into the air. For an instant or two I was conscious of circumstances of confusion and commotion around me. I then became faint, staggered, and fell.

The next thing of which I was conscious with any distinct and perfect recollection, was the awaking up as from a long and troubled sleep full of dreams and fantasies. I

could not at once collect my thoughts, but turned my eyes here and there, trying in vain to ascertain where I was. I was not in my own bed at Beechwood, nor could I recognise the curtains, or the paper, or the furniture of the room, as being any with which I was acquainted. I was apparently alone, but there was a chair by the right side of the bed, and a book on a small table near it, giving me the idea that some one had been very lately with me. The room, though of small dimensions, had the appearance of comfort. Opposite the foot of the bed was a window. On the left side of me the curtains were closely drawn, but on the right they were open, and enabled me to see a bright fire burning in the grate, with a teakettle and a small saucepan by it. Neat and comfortable as it all was, it was evidently the chamber of sickness.

I was lying in this state of dreamy wakefulness, when I heard a door on the left side of the bed slowly and softly opened, and a gentle step cautiously approaching; the curtains were just parted asunder, and some one looked in upon me, and seeing that I was awake, came round to me on the other side. It was my sister. She looked pale and careworn; so altered since I parted from her only yesterday afternoon, as I thought, that I could not have imagined so few hours could have wrought such a change. She leaned over the bed, and taking my right hand in both of hers, bent her head down upon it, and I felt her warm tears and heard her sobs. But it was only for a moment; she looked up, and I saw such gladness and thankfulness in her eye, that I was sure neither the tears nor the sobs were altogether those of sorrow. I was going to speak, but she so earnestly forbade it, that I was silent; and, indeed, I found that I

could not have spoken above a whisper. I discovered, too, that I was so weak that I could not turn myself in my bed. We looked at each other, and said nothing.

At last I asked, as well as I could, how and where was my father. She answered that he was quite well, and not far off, but that I must see no one else until Mr. Howard had been here, which might be expected almost immediately.

I lay for some time with my eyes closed, musing upon the late guilty transaction in which I had been engaged, and on the mercy which had been shown me that I was still in the land of the living; and I began to think that I must have been longer here than I had at first imagined. Whilst occupied with these thoughts, the door opened again, and my friend, Mr. Howard, came up to me, took my hand, asked me in a kind and feeling manner how I was, and presently desiring the nurse to call my sister, said, "Miss Anneslie, you need be under no further alarm; your brother will now do very well, and I hope within a few days will be able to sit up a little in that arm-chair yonder, by the fire. At present, however, he must be kept in bed, and perfectly quiet; much depends upon this."

I heard the words, "Thank God," in a low voice, but of deep emotion, as my sister sank down upon the chair just by her; but almost instantly recovering herself, she rose and left us.

Mr. Howard then said, "Mr. Anneslie, you have in your sister a kind and able nurse. You must do all that she bids you," he added, with a smile, "and just now have no will of your own."

Then giving me a friendly pressure of the hand, and promising to see me again at an early hour next day—it being now evening—he took his leave.

My sister returning whispered that my father would be with me immediately. He came with a pleased and pleasing look, such as was quite a comfort to my heart, for I saw in it that I had full forgiveness from him of all I had done, and of all which I had caused others to suffer.

"My dear Herbert," he said, "when a father and son meet together on such an occasion as this, the first thing they ought to do is to offer up their prayers and praises."

He then knelt down, and in few words prayed fervently for the pardon of past sin, for grace henceforth to live wholly to God, and for a heart sensible of his mercies, and grateful for his forbearance and loving-kindness.

CHAPTER XII.

FROM this time I progressed as favourably as possible, and was soon able to sit up for some hours daily, and to converse a little with my father and Jane. I learned that I was still in the neighbourhood of Elton Hill; but the subject which filled all our thoughts, was mentioned by none of us. I knew not how to begin it, and it was evidently avoided by my father and sister, no doubt from fear of exciting me, and so producing injurious effects on my yet shattered nerves and feeble frame.

For the same reason, probably, little mention was made of the family at the Lodge, excepting that they had expressed great concern at what had taken place, had sent several times to inquire after me, and had now left Beechwood for their house in town. I listened anxiously for the name of Fanny, but the name was not uttered, and I could not pronounce it.

By degrees I gained strength to walk up and down the gravel in front of the little cottage where we were, leaning on my father's or sister's arm on one side, and steadying myself with a walkingstick on the other. One day, as we were thus strolling out, I said, "My dear Jane, do tell me all which has happened, for as I am the principal person concerned, I think I ought not any longer to be kept in the dark."

"My dear Herbert," she replied, "you are now sufficiently recovered, I rejoice to think, to permit me to speak with you on the subject, and I will do so when we shall find ourselves sitting round the fire and quite alone."

"And in the mean time," I said, "I will tell you a dream I had, which is so vividly before me at this moment, that I can scarcely believe it not to have been a reality."

"I thought that I awoke out of a sleep, and found myself lying in a grotto ornamented with shells and trellis-work. My thoughts were confused, I was conscious of something of a very painful character in which I had been concerned, but could not distinctly remember what it was. I tried to form an idea of where I was, how I came here, and how long I had been sleeping. But it was all a mystery. Presently turning my head round I saw Mr. Howard, and behind him caught a glimpse of a young female looking anxiously at me, but apparently desiring not to be seen. I had met her only once before, and that many years ago, but I knew her in a moment. My astonishment was so great, that I made no attempt to speak, and whilst I was yet gazing on her, the scene began to change. The objects about me, which before were so distinct, swam mistily before my eyes, gradually receded, and seemed to vanish into the air. I thought I was no longer in a grotto, but walking with this fair young creature in a

wood. It was night, but the stars were shining brightly. As we were passing along, I imagined that I perceived among the trees, at a little distance from the path, the dark figures of three men prowling mysteriously about, and having their eyes upon us. My companion was greatly alarmed, and came up close to me for protection. On a sudden one of the men we had seen sprang out upon her, and endeavoured to drag her away. I grappled fiercely with him, whilst the poor girl clung to me, entreating me to save her. With a desperate effort I flung the villain to the earth, but the other two rushing up to me, I was obliged to turn and defend myself, and she fell again into his hands. Her cries, as he hurried away into the thick wood, seemed to give me supernatural strength. I thought that I should yet overcome both my assailants, when one of them drew a large knife from his pocket, and stabbed me in the side. I fell to the ground. And the next circumstance of which I have any recollection, was the finding myself in the bed which I have been lately occupying, and you, dear Jane, coming in a few minutes afterwards, and sitting by my side."

My sister appeared to be much interested, and even affected, whilst I was telling her this. But she made no observation upon it, and we turned into the cottage.

"Now, Jane, you must fulfil your promise, and tell me all about it—what has happened to myself, and to you, and to my dear father. I am well aware how unhappy I have made you all, so do not spare me, but tell me everything, that I may know all, and repent of all, and make all the amends in my power."

"Well, my dear brother, so I will," she replied. And then, under emotions, which at times she was unable to control, she told me as follows:—

"It was about nine o'clock in the evening of the day on which you left us, and my father and I were talking about you, and numbering almost the hours that you were yet to be with us, and speaking (a very unusual occurrence) of the change which had taken place in reference to your position and prospects in life, when we were interrupted by a ring of the door-bell, and Mr. Howard was announced. After a few minutes, thinking his business might be of a private nature, I left the room. Mr. Howard then broke to my father, with all the kindness and caution possible, the event which had occurred; assuring him that your conduct throughout had been of the most honourable character, and that you were wholly irreproachable and irresponsible for all which had passed; adding that, although you would necessarily suffer confinement and inconvenience for some time, he saw no occasion to apprehend any alarming consequences. He then delivered the letter which you had given to his care.

"My father made no remark on what he had heard, but quietly told Mr. Howard that he should go immediately to you, and should be ready to accompany him in a few minutes. He then came to me, and telling me that you were not well, but that I was not to alarm myself, said that I should hear from him the first thing in the morning. I so earnestly entreated to go likewise, that he promised I should follow the next day, and with this I was obliged to be satisfied.

"On reaching you, they found you ill beyond their worst apprehensions. You were in a state of delirium, and knew neither your father nor Mr. Howard. For nearly three weeks your life appeared to hang on a thread, and it was feared that, even if life were spared, reason would have fled.

"In an early stage of your illness, we were surprised one day by a carriage driving up to the door, and the most emi-

ment surgeon in Exeter gave in his card, having been sent for express by Mr. Henry Cranstoun, on hearing that you were in so dangerous a state. But he said that all which science could do had been done already. That there was much to be hoped from the youth, robust constitution, and naturally even temperament, which he understood to be peculiarly characteristic of Mr. Herbert Anneslie. And that the event must now be left in the hands of Him who directs the skill of the physician, and blesses the power of medicine, and often restores to health even when these have failed.

"Through His mercy, dear Herbert, the crisis was at length happily passed. Mr. Howard communicated to us the glad tidings, assuring us that there was now every prospect of your recovery. A long undisturbed sleep shortly after confirmed his anticipations and our most ardent desires. And on my return to your room that day, after the absence of a few minutes, I had the unspeakable delight of finding you awake, with mind and intellect unimpaired."

"And pray, dear Jane," said I,—having given my sister, time to recover her composure, for her recollections during this little narrative had quite overpowered her,—“pray what did the Cranstouns think of all this?”

"They were greatly grieved on the occasion," she replied, "and acted a very friendly part. I had just received a note from my father the next morning, mentioning what had taken place, when Mr. Cranstoun called, expressing his sympathy with us, and not less his displeasure at the conduct of Mr. Dastard; for the affair had become known, and was in everybody's mouth. Presently afterwards Mrs. Cranstoun drove up, and wished to take us all back with her to the Lodge to remain there during papa's absence. In the course of the afternoon, Fanny came by herself, scarcely

able to speak for tears, and insisting that she was the cause of all which had happened. She was sadly agitated when we parted; and begged of me, as I should find opportunity, to say how deeply she was afflicted, and how fervently her prayers would be offered up for you."

To describe my feelings whilst Jane was telling me this, is impossible. My thoughts had taken wing, and were far away, mocking at the confinement of a sick-chamber, and at the debility of feeble limbs, not yet able to endure the shaking of a carriage, or the keenness of the wintry blast. They were traversing every spot where Fanny and I had ever met,—haunting every place where I had ever seen her,—reproducing every word which she had ever uttered, every tune which she had ever played, and every expression, however varied, and however fleeting, which her countenance had ever indicated. Those soft blue eyes had wept—they had wept for me. Oh! what joy! how amply was I repaid for all I had suffered? For the moment I was really happy.

Presently something said, "Herbert, you are going on too fast. What an interpretation you have put on your sister's artless and simple words! Would not any girl weep for a mere acquaintance, if he should be in trouble and distress, particularly if these should have been caused in any manner by herself? Do not the overstrained nerves of every girl of feeling recover their tone through weeping? Did not Fanny weep when she tended the poor boy with the broken leg?" I could not deny the truth of this reasoning, and from an overjoyed exultation of heart, I became pensive and melancholy.

"Whilst we are on the subject of the Cranstouns," resumed my sister, after a considerable pause, "I ought to show

you a kind note which I received from Fanny, just as they were leaving Beechwood. You were, alas! in no condition to hear about it then, and I have had it ever since locked up in my writing-desk. And indeed," she added, colouring a little, "the note rather pained me, for we shall miss them so much on our return home. However, here it is," taking it out of her desk, and putting it into my hand. It was as follows:—

"MY DEAREST JANE,—I do not know how to disclose to you what must be the contents of this note, for it does seem so like deserting you in your trouble; but we are obliged to leave Beechwood immediately. Papa says, that particular business calls him to London, and that we must all be ready to start with him to-morrow morning. I do hope that your brother is going on as well as possible, and will soon be well, quite well. I shall then be able to resume my usual cheerfulness, but not till then. I shall be for ever reproaching myself for this affliction to you all.

"Pray write to me often, and tell me all about yourself and dear Beechwood. We are all very anxious for your brother's recovery, and all unite in best wishes and kindest regards. And with fond love to yourself,

"Believe me, my dear Jane,

"Most affectionately yours,

"FANNY CRANSTOUN.

"P. S.—There is some idea of Henry going to the Continent for a year or two. I shall expect a line every other day from you to say how your brother is."

"Well, my dear Jane," said I, "I am glad you have shown me this letter. I had almost begun to think that Fanny Cranstoun had acted but a cold part on this occasion. But have you written to her since, or heard from her?"

"I wrote to her, dear Herbert, in reply to her kind letter, to say that you were very ill, and that I would write again as soon as I could communicate anything favourable. Accordingly, as soon as Mr. Howard gave us the happy assurance of your danger being past, I wrote a few lines to acquaint Fanny with it."

"And have you heard from her in reply?"

"No, Herbert; but it is reported at the Lodge that she is ill. I cannot help being anxious about her, and this has been one reason why I have not shown you her letter before. Of course I have not written to her again, because my letter either would not be given to her, or would only add to her distress from her being unable to answer it."

Here then was something more for me to think upon. Fanny's letter was very kind, and expressed all the interest which female delicacy would admit of. At the same time this interest might be quite compatible with her engagement to Mr. Dastard.

Then again the sudden departure of the family from Beechwood, which I knew was not in contemplation when I saw them last, suggested the idea that my attentions to Fanny had been the cause. Those of Henry Cranstoun to my sister, too, I imagined to be anything but agreeable to his father and mother; and perhaps for this reason he had been advised to travel. That my sister was attached to him I had long since suspected, and the great effort which it cost her several times during the day to restrain her tears, confirmed me in this persuasion.

And then, more than all the rest, I grieved over the illness of Fanny.

CHAPTER XIII.

"HERBERT," said my sister to me the next day, as she entered the little parlour where I was sitting alone, "some one wishes to see you ; and I am not sure that it may not be the same young friend whom you saw in your dream ; so you must brace up your nerves to receive her, and not, you know, be off to the woods, and let me find you presently in a high fever, and talking about things which never happened."

She said this in a laughing way, and whilst I was thinking what could be her meaning, and puzzling myself about the mystery which her words contained, she was gone, and the door suddenly closed before I was aware that she was leaving the room.

The next minute there was a gentle tap, and on my saying, "Come in," who should appear but indeed the same beautiful girl, whom I had first met at the gipsies' camp, and whom I had thought that I had since seen in the grotto, where I imagined I was lying !

She was much improved in personal appearance since I parted from her on that memorable night, when she conducted me through the wood from the wretches into whose hands I had fallen, and was the means of restoring me to my family. Her figure was more perfect. Her intelligent countenance had the same sweet smile and expression, but I thought it bore a melancholy cast. The bloom of her cheek was less bright, and her eye, less sparkling, seemed to sympathize with it, and to indicate that in the interval, since last we met, something had occurred which had left its impress on the mind, and which memory sadly recalled.

But all this only served to make her more interesting, and I thought her prettier than ever.

"My dear young friend," I said, "I am very glad indeed to see you again, but how came you here?"

"I am living very near," she replied.

"Living very near!" I exclaimed; "and then why have I not seen you before?"

"It was thought better that you should not. But indeed you have seen me once, though it was not in this house."

I was quite at a loss to comprehend her meaning.

"I certainly dreamed that I saw you, first in a grotto, and then in a wood."

"You saw me in a grotto, but not in a wood."

"My dear girl," I said, "pray tell me plainly and at once, what at present is very unintelligible to me. What grotto did I see you in? When was it? And how come I to know so little about it, as to believe it to have been only a dream?"

"The fact is simply this, Mr. Anneslie. I live about a mile from the place where you and Mr. Dastard met. On that day I was out for a walk in the road to Beechwood, when I saw a boy with a gig, apparently waiting for some one. On asking whose it was, he told me that two gentlemen had just left it with him, and were gone across the fields. Being myself of vagrant habits, as you well know," she said, with a smile, "I suspected something mysterious, and followed in the direction pointed out. As I was going, I heard the report of fire-arms, and hastening on to a hedge which was before me, I looked over, and saw two men running away, and you lying on the ground with Mr. Howard kneeling by your side. On reaching the spot, I found you insensible and bleeding profusely. Having ob-

tained the assistance of two men at work in a distant field, we brought you on a hurdle to a little favourite grotto, where I often sit with Mrs. Edwards in the warm summer days, and which was scarcely a quarter of a mile from the place where you had fallen. Whilst the men went to get more help, and some better mode of conveyance, Mr. Howard and I remained with you. Presently you came to yourself, and turning your head round, I believe that you saw me, for you fixed your eyes earnestly in the direction where I was standing behind Mr. Howard. In a few seconds you became much excited, struggled, and talked in a very rambling and incoherent manner. You then lay quiet, plainly from exhaustion, and did not appear to be conscious of anything. In this state you were removed to the cottage in which you now are, it not being deemed advisable to take you home; and here the ball, which had nearly proved fatal, was extracted."

"How much I am indebted to you," I said, "for your kind attention to a poor wounded cavalier!" and taking her hand, I kissed it with the truest feelings of affectionate regard. She turned her face hastily away, and rising up from the chair on which she was sitting, first walked to the window, and then out of the room.

Here then the mystery of my supposed dream was cleared up. It was easy to understand how the sudden and most unexpected appearance at such a moment of one whom I had seen but once before, and then under such extraordinary circumstances, and so many years ago, had acted upon my confused thoughts; and how my bewildered imagination had presently wandered away to former scenes, and conjured up robbers and ruffians; and then how some sudden pang of the wound I had received, made me think that I was en-

gaged in conflict with them, and that one of them had drawn a knife, and plunged it into my side.

Finding that my little gipsy friend was living with a Mrs. Edwards, only about half a mile from us, I proposed to Jane the next morning that, as the day was remarkably mild for the season, we should walk over and call upon her. I said that I was sure I could accomplish it, and it would help to prepare me for my removal to Beechwood, which was to take place a few days hence. Accordingly we went.

We were received by Mrs. Edwards, with a quiet ease of manner which we should hardly have expected from one in her humble circumstances. But indeed, as we learned afterwards from her young companion, she had seen better days. Her husband had been chief mate of a merchant-ship in the East India Company's service, but had been unfortunately drowned by the upsetting of a boat as he was leaving the vessel for the shore in a rough sea: and his widow was left with no other provision than a pension. An aunt, who was living in this part of the country, just out of the village of Elton, offered her an asylum in her own little cottage, which, on her decease a few years after, she bequeathed to her. Here then we found her, and having conversed for a few minutes on indifferent subjects, we inquired for Ellen Darnley.

"Ellen," she answered, "is out walking, and probably on the road to Beechwood."

"She is a very artless and intelligent girl," observed Jane.

"And, I am sure, a very graceful and beautiful one," I added.

"She is a very good girl," returned Mrs. Edwards, "and - great comfort to me."

"We all feel much interested about her," said my sister. "I hope you will not consider me improperly inquisitive in matters which do not belong to me, if I ask whether she is related to you."

"No, Miss Anneslie, she is not related to me."

I was very curious to know something about her, and said, in a gay, careless manner, "I am certain, Mrs. Edwards, there is some mystery and romance in the history of this pretty girl, and I long to know it."

"If there were any mystery, Mr. Anneslie, probably I should not be at liberty to reveal it."

This was said in a most good-tempered manner, but with a seriousness which precluded any further conversation on the point.

Having chatted away some time longer with the good lady, and having made her promise to drink tea with us the following evening, and to bring Ellen with her, we took our leave.

We looked out for our young friend, hoping to meet her as she was returning from her walk, but we were disappointed.

The next morning, however, she called with an apology from Mrs. Edwards, who begged to be excused from keeping her engagement with us in the evening, as she had taken cold, and was afraid of venturing out into the night air.

My sister was gone to see some of the sick persons in the village, and I desired Ellen might be shown into the parlour where I was.

"Sit down, dear Ellen," I said.

"*Dear!*" she replied quickly, whilst the crimson mounted to her very forehead; but, instantly recovering herself, she delivered the message from Mrs. Edwards.

Having expressed our disappointment that we had not the pleasure of finding her at home on the preceding day,

"Ellen," I said, "I seem to know you, and yet I do *not* know you. I know you only by repeated acts of your kindness to me. But I want to know something more of you,—all you can tell me,—for I feel the greatest interest in you; I should be most ungrateful if I did not."

"You know almost everything already, Mr. Anneslie," she replied. "I have told you before that I was born a gipsy. My father's name was John Darnley. When I was about seven years old, a lady, who had taken great interest in me, offered to place me at a superior day-school in the town in which she resided. The offer, of course, was thankfully accepted. I not only lived in the house of my benefactress, but after a short time I was the playfellow of her children, and treated as one of them. I was in my eleventh year when she died. I daresay she would have done something to provide for me, but she was taken away very suddenly. Her husband had died two or three years before, and the children were all very young, the eldest being only one year older than myself. So I went back to live with my dear father and mother. You know all the rest, Mr. Anneslie, at least up to the period of your first seeing me."

"Well, Ellen, and now tell me your history since we parted in the wood five years ago."

"Oh!" she replied, "I was so disgusted with those persons, and so horrified by their deeds, that, within a day or two afterwards, I determined to leave them, and told them so. They were very angry, and all said that I should be the worse for it some day, and that if ever anything which I had seen should be made known, they would swear that I was

the cause of it all, and that it was my artifices with the men which had prevailed on them to do it. They said they believed that I meant to betray them, or I should not have helped you off as I did. And I think very likely they would have murdered and buried me, if they had not been afraid of inquiries being made after me by the tribe to which my parents and aunt belonged, and which had committed me to their keeping. So they said I might go if I would, but that I should one day rue it; and I left them, as they were decamping for some distant part of the kingdom with all the haste they could.

“My father and mother had often spoken to me of a Mr. Waldy, living at Beechwood, and had told me that, if ever I should be in great distress after they were dead, I should go to him. I knew that Beechwood was somewhere in the west of England, and I believed it to be at no great distance from where I now was; for my roving life had given me a rambling kind of knowledge about places and distances. So, coming to a farm-house, I inquired where Beechwood was, and which was the way to it. They told me that it was thirty or forty miles off, and over a very wild country, but they put me on the road to it; not, however, without expressing their surprise that so young a girl should be travelling about by herself. And some one said they hoped I did not belong to the gipsies who were supposed to have killed and stolen a sheep belonging to a farmer in the neighbourhood a few nights ago. But another said that I looked too innocent for that, and recommended me to be very careful, and not to be out late at night, nor to go along by-lanes or through woods, for that these who would steal a sheep would not mind doing me some harm.

“You cannot think, Mr. Anneslie, what a stir was made

about that sheep. In the public-house where I stopped the first night, I saw a printed paper, describing the dress, and height, and figures of two men, who had been seen prowling about the same evening the sheep was stolen, not far from the fold where it had been killed, and the particulars answered exactly to the two Coopers. And a reward was offered of £20, and something said about so many sheep having been lately lost in the neighbourhood, and there being such a number of gipsies about. And I fancied every one looked suspiciously at me. But the landlady was very kind, and would not take anything for my lodging, or the little supper I had had. As I was going away in the morning without a breakfast, she said she would not hear of such a thing, and that I should breakfast with her. And she gave me such nice tea, and bread and butter, and cold meat, that I can never forget that meal, nor cease to feel a grateful affection for that good woman. As I was leaving, she gave me, wrapped up in paper, what she said would serve me for my dinner, and slipped a shilling into my hand which would pay for my supper and bed, and then the next morning it would be no very long walk to Beechwood. Mr. Anneslie, there is often a kind heart under a coarse garment, and I am sure that hers was one of these, and often do I pray God to bless her.

“At last I found my way to Beechwood, and it was fortunate I did so, for I had but a few pence remaining when I got there, and I should have been obliged to beg, which our tribe never do. I immediately asked where Mr. Waldy lived, and told him of my father and mother, and what they had said to me about going to him, if I had no friend else. As soon as he heard the name of Darnley, he told me that he had been under considerable obligations to him and his

wife, and he would take care I wanted for nothing. He then took me with him to a cottage in an adjoining parish, the occupier of which he said was a very nice woman, and he was sure I should be comfortable there. He desired me at the same time not to come over to him, nor to make myself known at Beechwood, lest some illnatured people should speak about his kindness to me, and make it unpleasant both to me and himself. Here I remained for about six or seven months,—all through one beautiful spring and summer, I well remember,—and I would come every day as near to Beechwood as I could venture, and wander about the pretty walks and lanes. I often saw you, Mr. Anneslie, and longed to speak to you; and I was sometimes nearer to you than I meant to be, but always managed to escape your seeing me. And I frequently saw your sister and brothers; and once I saw your mother walking by herself to see a sick person at that end of the parish, and she came so unexpectedly upon me that I was forced to stop, and she spoke so kindly to me, and looked and smiled so like yourself, Mr. Anneslie, that I hastened away into a shady spot, and sat down and cried.”

Ellen had been hurried along by her recollections, and, I verily believe, almost thought at the moment that she was now sitting in that shady spot, and that no one was witness to the tears which were fast falling down.

Not appearing to notice them, I rose up, as if to look for something in a drawer in another part of the room, and when I returned, she proceeded,—

“Mr. Waldy came frequently to see me, and told me one day that he had determined I should have the advantage of a good education, and that he had looked out a school for me. There accordingly I went, and remained for four years.

Since I left it, I have been living with Mrs. Edwards, with whom Mr. Waldy placed me, and who is very kind to me indeed. And this, Mr. Anneslie, is the whole history of my life."

"Does Mr. Waldy ever visit you now?" I asked.

"Yes, very often. He says that he considers me as his pupil, and that he must not allow me to lose the benefit of the education I have received. He takes great pains in instructing me."

The mystery of the ring was now solved. Mr. Waldy had it from Ellen, and Ellen from the gipsy. But how came Ellen by it? I did not question her on the subject. Still I was as much as ever at a loss for the meaning of Mr. Waldy's words, that he "suspected I was about to add to the bitterness of his life."

"Did you ever mention to Mr. Waldy, Ellen, the circumstance of our first acquaintance?"

"No," she replied, almost in a whisper, as if the walls had ears, "I never so much as hinted at it. I have my fears even now about the stealing of that sheep."

I thought her fears very idle and groundless, and took no notice of what she had just said.

Jane entering at this moment, Ellen rose to depart; but we both felt the greatest interest in her, and begged her not to do so. We talked on various subjects, and found her exceedingly well informed; her remarks evincing great good sense, and much reflection on what she had either seen or read.

When she left us, we charged her with the expression of our regret to Mrs. Edwards, that we were to lose the expected pleasure of seeing them both that evening at tea—a message of kindness, which had the merit, at least, of being very sincere.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE last day of my sojourn in this friendly cottage arrived. There is always something of a serious, if it be not of a melancholy character, in the last of anything. I could moralise much about it; but I spare my readers—only assuring them that I bade adieu to the little cottage with feelings of peculiar regret.

It was under different feelings, and with very mingled emotions, that I entered our own little home at Beechwood; and, as soon as I could escape from the affectionate congratulations which greeted me there, ascended to my bedroom; but this too is a private matter.

All welcomed me back. Neighbours sent to inquire. The sweet bells of Beechwood church poured forth many a peal; and, will modern bell-ringers believe it?—the honest kind-hearted men resolutely refused a handsome douceur which my father offered them, saying, that “Mr. Herbert was come back to his home, and that they rang for joy and not for gain.”

It was not long, you may be sure, ere I visited the stable; and I am confident that my horse knew me by some animal instinct, before the door was opened, for he gave a low subdued neigh in token of recognition as I was passing through the yard; and when I went up to him, he put down his head to be patted and fondled, and showed by the most manifest signs that he was delighted to renew our acquaintance. I was very desirous to mount him, but fearing that his satisfaction at having me again on his back after so long a separation, might be rather of too sportive a character, I directed the intelligent young fellow whom we had temporarily hired

to look after him, to take him on the following day to the meet; and, if Lord Clydesdale should make any mention of me, to say to his lordship, that I hoped soon to pay my respects to him in person.

Lord Clydesdale did not disappoint my rather vain anticipations, but made kind inquiries for me, and sent me a most friendly and obliging message. And in the course of the day he did me a yet more essential act of kindness; for observing that the lad was a little more forward in a good run than he thought was agreeable to my intentions, he sent one of his whippers-in to say so to him, and that he had better take the horse home, and tell his master that the hounds should meet at Beechwood on the Wednesday in the following week.

The next day I rode over to call upon Mrs. Edwards and Ellen Darnley; the former was not at home, but I found the latter there, and soon perceived that something had greatly distressed her.

"Mr. Anneslie," she said, "the forebodings of ill which I expressed to you are likely to be verified.

"Four days ago," she continued, "two men were taken up in the neighbourhood of Exeter, for housebreaking. The evidence proving insufficient, they were about to be discharged, when the circumstance of their being gipsies bringing to recollection the sheep which had been stolen about five years before, a reference was made to the *Hue and Cry* of that date, a copy of which had been kept at the jail; and the persons of the men now in custody answering precisely to those described there, they were recommitted. The next morning one of them, on condition of his life being spared, confessed to being a party to the stealing of the sheep. And my informant tells me that in his confession he

mentioned some names, which caused the utmost astonishment, but which were not allowed to transpire."

"Ellen," I said, "this is only some idle attempt to frighten you."

"Oh! no," she replied; "all I have told you is perfectly true. Although I am no longer a wandering gipsy, I am still considered as one of the fraternity. Our calling have means of information little known or thought of by others, and whatever affects the welfare of any individual of a tribe is communicated with the greatest accuracy, and with a rapidity almost past belief. I was warned at the same time that I am no longer safe, nor do I consider myself so for a moment."

And, strange to say, scarcely a minute had elapsed, when I heard footsteps approaching the door. Ellen heard them too, and turned pale. The next moment two men walked unceremoniously into the room where we were. One was a tall athletic person, the other stout, but shorter, and seeming to be subordinate to the first. I was on the point of going up to them to demand what business they had here, when Ellen entreated me to be still, and not to speak.

The tall man then walked up to her, and said, "I believe your name is Ellen Darnley?" To which she simply answered in the affirmative.

"Well then, Ellen Darnley, you are my prisoner. There are certain charges against you, for which you must answer to the magistrates. Here is my warrant for taking you along with me, which I must do. It goes against me, though, to cause sorrow to such a pretty face."

"Mind, sir," I said, "that you execute your duty with as much civility as the nature of your office will admit of."

"And pray, sir," replied the man, nettled, but not alto-

gether disrespectfully, "may I ask who you are, thus to direct me in the discharge of my duties?"

"My name, sir, is Anneslie, and any insult or incivility offered to Ellen Darnley I will repay."

The two men looked at each other in evident astonishment and perplexity.

"Sir," said the same speaker as before, "I beg your pardon, and that of this young lady. I did not intend to say anything impertinent or unfeeling, but I allow that I was a little too jocular, and I am sorry for it. In truth, sir, I feel that I am sent on a very unpleasant errand, but I must execute it. You say, sir, that your name is Annealie—the gentleman, sir, if I may be so bold as to ask, whom we have lately read about in the newspapers?"

"My name, sir," I repeated, "is Herbert Anneslie."

"I am sure, sir," he returned, "there must be some mistake, but you are charged with being privy to the business in hand; and I know that a summons has been sent to your house requiring your attendance at the examination before the magistrates to-morrow."

"Well, sir, I am quite ready to accompany you," I replied. "Whatever mistake there may be, I am quite aware that it is not in your power to rectify it; and I should be very unwilling, under the circumstances, to be separated from this young lady, whom it is my bounden duty, as it shall be my business and pleasure, to comfort and to protect."

"You are not my prisoner, sir," said the man, "and therefore I do not know that I am justified in allowing you to go with us. I see, sir, that you are booted and spurred, so you have probably your horse near at hand, and could find your own way to Exeter."

"But my good friend, it would be very inconvenient to

me to take my horse such a distance; and, besides, I am not very well able to ride so far, just now; so I shall feel much obliged by your allowing me a place in that covered cart which I see you have brought with you."

The man knit his brows, compressed his lips, and put on a thoughtful look, as if not very well knowing what answer to make, but at last he said,—

"Well, sir, as I know your presence will be wanted to-morrow, I suppose there will be no great harm in giving you a lift, but we must be quick."

Fortunately a neighbour, who had seen two strange men enter her cottage, had gone in search of Mrs. Edwards, to communicate the circumstance to her, and at this moment the good lady returned. Great was her distress when she heard of the charge against poor Ellen, whom she begged to be permitted to accompany, but this the constable would not listen to. I wrote a few hasty lines to my father, telling him what had happened, and entreating that neither he nor Jane would give themselves a moment's uneasiness on account of either Ellen or myself, or of the serving of the summons which they might expect to receive; assuring them that there was not the slightest occasion for any, and adding that I might be heard of the next day at the magistrates' office in Exeter.

Mrs. Edwards promised to procure a trusty person to ride my horse home, and to deliver my note without delay.

The shorter man having taken his seat in front, with the reins in his hand, we entered the cart, the head constable placing himself in one corner, and leaving Ellen and myself to sit where, and to converse as, we pleased. Few words, however, passed between us. The horse trotted well, and the cart was light. Our destined point was about five-and-

twenty miles distant, and we arrived at the high walls and iron-studded door of Exeter gaol in less than four hours.

I put a couple of guineas into Mr. Thompson's hand (for that I found was the name of our conductor), entreating that every possible kindness and indulgence might be shown to Ellen Darnley. This he faithfully promised should be done, adding that his wife was the matron of the establishment.

As we parted, Ellen fixed her eyes upon me with a look full of anxiety and affection. The next moment I heard the bars and bolts of the massive door, through which she was conducted, close behind her with a peculiarly harsh and sullen sound that grated so painfully on my unpractised ear, and made my heart sink within me.

I had scarcely finished my breakfast the next morning at the inn, when the waiter announced a lady and gentleman, and my father and Jane entered the room.

"Well, Herbert," said the former, laughing, "you are quite a man of the world, and are making, no doubt, great proficiency in that most abstruse of all sciences, the knowledge of mankind. You observe it in all its phases—now in the drawing-room, then in the hunting-field—next in the shady alleys of the great metropolis, and to-day in a court of justice. But, joking apart, what is this new adventure?"

It had been agreed between Ellen and myself that we should at once confess everything; so that, being no longer bound by my promise of secrecy, I related to my father all regarding the gipsies which had passed the night that I was among them. I did not, however, mention that I had seen the ring since in Mr. Waldy's possession; thinking that, as soon as the latter became acquainted with the circumstances which had now come to light, he would restore it, and explain how he had obtained it.

"I cannot blame you for your conduct," said my father, after a few moments' reflection, "but, nevertheless, it is a very unfortunate affair; and I am apprehensive, I confess, for Ellen Darnley, who was actually one of the gang at the time. However, we owe her everything we can do; and everything we can do shall be done. She must be a very extraordinary as well as most amiable character. I used to see her at the cottage sometimes, and always thought what a pretty modest-looking person she was, but I never had any conversation with her beyond the brief interchange of some kind words when we met. I should much like to see her and to talk with her. As soon as I received your note yesterday I walked over and showed it to Mr. Waldy, knowing what interest he takes in her. He immediately said that he considered it to be his duty to do all in his power for the poor girl, and that he should like to accompany Jane and myself to Exeter. He accordingly came with us, and is now gone to the gaol."

"My dear father," I replied, "I am greatly obliged to you for the kind interest which you take in poor Ellen, to whom I owe so much."

My sister, too, attempted a cheerful look, and laughed at finding me engaged with justices of the peace and the myrmidons of the law, and mixed up with gipsies and sheepstealers; but there were care and sorrow in her countenance. This new event had come too quickly upon her late nursing and anxieties. She felt, too, very keenly for Ellen.

The result of the investigation before the magistrates was—that Henry Cooper was admitted as approver; Thomas Cooper fully committed for trial at the approaching special assize; Ellen Darnley was released on bail, my father and

Mr. Waldy being her sureties; and I was bound over to give evidence.

We all then returned home, Mr. Waldy taking charge of Ellen.

CHAPTER XV.

ON the Monday following, I received a letter from Henry Cranstoun, in these few kind words :—

“DEAR HERBERT ANNESLIE,

“I shall not endeavour to express how truly I have sympathized with you in the sufferings you have lately undergone. I cannot discard Mr. Dastard from his relationship with me, but he has no longer any place in my regard. Our house too, is still open to him, which is the way of the fashionable world; and so, having once plainly told him my sentiments, I say nothing more.

“You have had with you a kind feeling father, and an affectionate sister to nurse you, or I should certainly have run down occasionally to see that you were taken care of. In the meantime I have heard of you frequently from our common friend, Mr. Howard, and rejoice that you are again at Beechwood, where I would that I were too! for it is with reluctance and an ill grace that I exchange the quiet and manly exercises of the country, for the noise and dissipation of London.

“I believe that I am about to visit the Continent, but nothing is as yet fixed either as to the time or the route.

“I am sorry to tell you that Fanny has been ill of a fever, which at one time caused us considerable alarm. But she is better, and able to drive out for an hour daily in the park.

"I beg you to present to your father and sister my most friendly regards, and to accept the assurance that

I am, dear Herbert Anneslie,

Very faithfully yours,

HENRY CRANSTOUN.

"University Club."

"I was sure," exclaimed my sister, "that Fanny had been ill, too ill to write, or I should have heard from her long since. Poor girl! how little we anticipated this, when we used to see her so full of life, and health, and spirits at the Lodge, and in those happy rides, Herbert, which we used to have together!"

I made some common-place observation in reply, for my heart was too full of the subject to trust myself to speak upon it. The sun seemed to shine so bright on the scenes which her words had conjured up, and nature with her tints and her tresses was so gay and so lovely, and all was so vivid in my recollection, that its contrast with the present gloomy state of my mind was painful in the extreme.

"I think, Jane," I presently said, "that I ought to go and call upon Lord Clydesdale."

So ordering my horse, I rode over to Atherstone Park.

The magnificent house of this nobleman, the beautiful grounds, the unrivalled conservatory, and the spacious stables filled with hunters in the highest condition, were the great attraction of the county.

"Just in time for luncheon, Mr. Anneslie," said his lordship, at the same time introducing me to Lady Clydesdale.

He then asked me several questions about myself, and in particular what were the circumstances alluded to in a letter which he had received that morning from Exeter, about a

gipsy girl and myself, a quorum of magistrates, and a couple of sheepstealers.

Of course, I had to repeat the story.

"Is she pretty," asked Lady Clydesdale.

"To be sure," observed his lordship; "all gipsy girls are pretty at her age."

"It is really a romantic tale," exclaimed a lively girl of about nineteen; "no doubt you are in love with her?"

"No one can help falling in love with a pretty gipsy girl," said Lord Clydesdale; "I am certain I shall do so when I see her."

"Then I must take care that you do not see her," said his lady, playfully.

"That I think will be difficult, for I must be in attendance at the assizes, and the trial is to take place then."

"We will attend court on that day," returned her ladyship, turning to her niece, the Honourable Caroline De Vere.

"I should like it above all things," was her reply.

"To see me a prisoner at the bar? which is by no means an impossible event," I observed.

"Barring your being sent to visit foreign climes at your country's expense," said his lordship.

"You are improving in your puns, my dear uncle," said Miss de Vere, rising from the table. "And now are we not to have a ride this beautiful day, since you are not on duty in the field?"

"Certainly, my dear; so go, and put on your riding dress, whilst I walk with Mr. Anneslie to the stables."

On our return we found Miss De Vere standing on the hall steps ready attired for riding.

She was decidedly pretty. There was a sparkle in her eye, and a playful archness in her look, which were very winning.

Her riding habit set off her beautiful figure to advantage, and the most fastidious critic could have taken no exception to the grace with which she sat and managed her steed, as she galloped across the park. Lord Clydesdale shook me kindly by the hand, and saying, "we meet at Beechwood on Wednesday, Mr. Anneslie," mounted his horse, and went in pursuit of the fair fugitive.

I then returned to the stables, and took a more leisurely survey of the horses than I had been able to do in the hurried walk with their lordly owner. The groom, perceiving that I understood the points of the noble animal, stripped them of their clothes, that I might more freely exercise my criticism. My own horse was then brought out, upon which he complimented me in return; and making him an acknowledgment for his trouble and attention, I directed my way homewards.

I may as well mention here what I afterwards learned of Miss De Vere. She was not, in fact, in any degree related to Lord or Lady Clydesdale, but the only and orphan child of her ladyship's earliest and dearest friend. Her parents had both died when she was quite young, and her widowed mother, in a very affecting letter, delivered after her decease, had commended her little girl to the care of Lady Clydesdale. With his lordship's consent, whose first care in life was to promote the wishes and happiness of his lady, Miss De Vere was removed to Atherstone Park, where she received every advantage which the first society, and the most finished education, could give her. Her many amiable qualities so endeared her to them, that Lord and Lady Clydesdale adopted her as their niece, which she was generally believed to be. In her noble patrons, Miss De Vere experienced all the kindness and affection of the most in-

dulgent parents, and they in her all the fondness of a daughter.

As I was riding quietly home across the fields, and was now halfway to Beechwood, I perceived Mr. Waldy coming along a footpath towards me. He was walking slowly, and in deep thought, as usual. It had been my intention to make him a low bow, and to pass on; but it was not his that I should do any such thing.

"Are you in a hurry, Herbert?" he said, abruptly.

"Not particularly so, sir," I replied.

"Then you can accompany me a short distance?"

"Certainly, sir."

I then dismounted, and we walked side by side.

"Herbert," he presently said, "you are at a perilous age; and when away from home, thrown upon the wide world, without authority to control, or a friend to guide you, you are in very perilous circumstances."

I made no remark, awaiting what he had further to say.

"In recollection, it is but a short time ago, Herbert, that I was at your age, and in such circumstances as yours, only that mine were even more perilous, because I had no virtuous home occasionally to go to, and had never experienced the blessedness of parental instruction and example. You have both, but you are not therefore safe. And I would fain have the son of my dearest friends—I would fain have Herbert Anneslie, for his own sake—escape my sins and my sorrows."

He paused like a man having something much at heart to say, and thinking in what words to say it.

"Herbert, avoid sensual pleasure. She is a siren who looks so fair, and charms so sweetly, that few that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life."

We walked on together some paces in silence.

"I was not always the sorrowful man that you have ever known me, Herbert—a man wearisome to others and a burden to himself. It is sin which has made me such. Not that I was a mocker or blasphemer, or an open and avowed profligate. But I had no real sense of religion. I was a lover of sinful pleasure. I lived without God in the world. And all the rest followed of course. Some day, Herbert, you may know more. It is sufficient to say now, that I have not my own sins alone to answer for, but that other souls will be demanded at my hands. Come with me, and you shall have a practical lesson of the wisdom I would teach you."

"How is your patient, sir, to-day?" said Mr. Waldy to the village doctor, who had just come out from a cottage, opposite to which we had now arrived.

"Worse in mind than in body, sir," was the reply; "and if ever there is a possessed man in these days, I am sure the devil is in him. I believe I ought to put on him a strait-waistcoat. It is by no means safe that his poor wife should be alone with him."

It was a pretty comfortable looking house, with a small flower garden enclosed by a paling.

"Just tie your horse up here, Herbert," said Mr. Waldy, "and follow me."

As my horse was not used to being hitched up in this fashion, like an apothecary's hack, and the experiment might not have been safe either for himself or others—to say nothing of the flower-garden, and its slender fence—I preferred giving him in charge to a man whom I saw at work just by, desiring him to lead him about.

We entered a small room, indifferently furnished, but

scrupulously neat and clean. I was looking out of the window into the garden, and thinking of the trials poor Ellen must encounter before the roses and pinks would be in blossom, when the door of an inner apartment opened, and turning round, I saw an interesting looking woman of middle age, but with a countenance full of wretchedness.

"How is your husband to-day, Mrs. Alford?" said Mr. Waldy.

"Worse in mind, sir," she replied; "he says that you do nothing but torment him, and his manner and language, when I endeavour to comfort him, are so violent that he quite frightens me. I have been trying to read to him those portions of Scripture which you pointed out, sir, but he would not listen. He said they were not meant for him. And when I persisted, he snatched the bible out of my hands, and flung it into the fire. Oh! sir, I entreat you to beware of him."

She then led the way into the next room, Mr. Waldy following, and beckoning me to do the same, which I reluctantly did.

In an arm-chair by the fireside, was sitting a man of gaunt figure and powerful frame, apparently about five-and-forty years of age. There was a sullen ferocity in his look, such as I had never seen in any countenance before.

Mr. Waldy offered to take him by the hand, saying in a kind manner, "I hope, William, you are better to-day, and more comfortable."

"You won't take the warning, then, which I gave you," he replied; "you had better now. I told you not to come to me any more—begone—there is a strong man armed within me, and I shall presently do his bidding—I know I shall—and yet I am loth—begone."

Mr. Waldy said that he would speak to him alone, and requested the wife and myself to retire.

I had been so much struck with the savage calmness of the man's manner, and thought there was something so ominous in it, that I slipped out into the garden, and took my position by a window, whence I could look into the room without being myself perceived. When I got there the man had left his chair, and was standing. Mr. Waldy was evidently attempting some persuasion with him. Presently I heard the words, "William, there is mercy for you; I have found mercy, and so may you."

"Mercy! you have found mercy, have you? Then it shall not be here," he exclaimed, with a fiendish yell; and at the same moment snatching up a large sharp-pointed knife which lay on the table just by, he made a desperate rush at Mr. Waldy. It was the spring of a tiger on his prey. His intended victim was happily aware in time of his danger, drew back a step, and instinctively raising his left arm, received the thrust upon it, and then instantly closed with the assassin. It was a struggle for life and death. In the meantime I had rushed back into the room—the appalling cries of Mrs. Alford adding to the horrors of the scene.

The combatants were still grappling with each other. They were both powerful men, but Mr. Waldy was five or six years the oldest, and at a time of life when this disparity was against him. One had now the additional strength of frenzy, the other the advantage of extraordinary coolness and self-command. The knife lay on the ground, and the blood was fast flowing down from Mr. Waldy's left arm.

"Stand back, Herbert," cried Mr. Waldy, as he saw, or rather heard me hastening to the conflict; "you have

nothing to answer for here, and you shall have no hand in this matter."

The prohibition, peremptorily and authoritatively as it was given, would not have withheld me for an instant, but Mr. Waldy had forced back his antagonist into a corner of the room, where the side walls protected the latter from any attack but in front, and I could not have attempted this but at the risk to Mr. Waldy of the vantage ground which he had obtained. I was awaiting the opportunity to interfere with effect, and watching the movements of Alford, who was evidently collecting himself for one great effort, his eyes bloodshot, and every vein seeming ready to burst, when on a sudden he relaxed his hold, and fell senseless to the ground.

Some neighbours, whom the shrieks of the poor wife had attracted to the spot, came in at this moment, and two or three of them were instantly despatched in various directions for the doctor. A quarter of an hour had scarcely elapsed between that gentleman's last quitting the house and now entering it again, but in the interval the wretched man who had so lately been the occupier of it had ceased to live. Happily a severe flesh wound, which he refused to wait to have dressed, was all the injury which Mr. Waldy had received. Having gazed on the features of the dead man ruefully and woefully for a few seconds—having attempted a few words of consolation to the afflicted widow, and promised to send some one to comfort and help her—he motioned to me to accompany him, and we left the cottage together.

"Herbert," he said, as soon as we had closed behind us the wicket of the little garden, "the lesson has been more awful than I anticipated. That man was once as free from

guile and guilt as yourself, and if I had died to day by his hands, it would have been but an instance of retributive justice. He lived in my service twenty years. He came to me quite a lad, quick, active, and intelligent. He did all I required in the day, and I left his evenings to himself. He fell into vicious habits, which I was at little pains to control. He went with me to the Continent, and there his wickedness was matured. When I came to myself, as is said of the prodigal son, I wished also to reform him. I made many and earnest efforts to do so, but he was incorrigible, and even retorted upon me my former life. I could not discharge him, nor cast off one whom my own carelessness and sinfulness had helped to ruin. I still hoped to reclaim him; but my altered and retired habits had long since been distasteful to him, and soon after I came to reside at Beechwood he married, and left me. Since then he has been living in the cottage we have just quitted. About six years ago he was at the point of death. The clergyman of the parish attended him through a long and severe illness, (and so did I, as if I had been another spiritual pastor,) and he appeared to be very penitent. Contrary to all expectation, he recovered. As is so often the case, he returned to his vicious habits and profane language. And then, as invariably follows, he became more openly and shamelessly wicked than he had been before. You have witnessed his end. Herbert," he added, looking full in my face, and speaking with great solemnity, "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, and live as in the sight of God."

Then abruptly wishing me a good afternoon, he desired me to leave him to himself. I mounted my horse, and giving him the rein, seemed to breathe more freely in proportion as I left the miserable cottage at a greater distance behind me.

My gallant steed, to judge by the speed with which he flew, appeared to be animated by a like feeling, and we did not slacken our pace until we came within sight of the village of Beechwood.

CHAPTER XVI.

I HAVE heard it told of the celebrated John Warde of Squerries—whose memory will for ever live in the annals of sporting, and who, if I mistake not, was at this very time hunting the New Forest—that, observing a strange horseman perversely posted under a covert, at the very point where a fox was attempting to break, he sent his whipper-in with instructions to place himself close by his side; which done, he rode up to him with all speed, and in no measured terms rated him as the most consummate blockhead that ever got astride a horse; that even a child might have known better than to have been there; and that it was past all bearing to have the sport of the whole field spoiled by the arrant stupidity of one man. The stranger sidled away with all becoming haste, and I'll warrant me never stood near a covert again without seeing half a dozen horsemen in his front.

On the Wednesday, as he had kindly promised, Lord Clydesdale met at Beechwood, and, as usual, a large field was assembled. The best of the stable had been selected, and reserved for the occasion. All were in high spirits and anxious expectation. The hacks had been discarded, and each was mounted on his horse for the day. The stirrups and the girths had been carefully looked to. The impatient steeds were shaking their heads, champing the bit, and

pawing the ground. His lordship had just thrown off the hounds. It was altogether a beautiful and animating scene—only that Fanny Cranstoun was not there.

Scarcely a minute had elapsed, when a favourite old hound challenged. It could be no mistake. A man might safely have risked upon it all he was worth. Presently another opened—and another—and another. The cry was thickening, and rising by rapid degrees into that full chorus which makes the heart swell, and the eyes glisten, and sets each man firm in his saddle—and brings it all back to me now in almost tearful remembrance, when occasionally, in declining health, and no longer equal to the fatigue and excitement of the field, I hear it in my solitary walks. Lord Clydesdale gave one long loud cheer, which rung through wood and dale. I was near him, as I always endeavoured to be, knowing that I could not then be far wrong. It was evident that the fox was making for the very point we all most wished, and where his fellow had broken away on a former occasion. Already did we anticipate in imagination the trial of speed over the open, and then that deep ground down in the vale, and what might be the fate at the brook. We were just rounding the side of the covert to be on good terms for the expected burst, when lo! we saw a well-dressed gentlemanly-looking man, well mounted, but not in scarlet, in the very place of all others where he ought not to have been. At this moment he caught sight of poor renard on the bank just ready to spring. In his simplicity and excitement he gave a loud halloo, and even cracked his whip. The result, of course, was fatal to all the hopes of the day. The devoted animal turned back, and in another moment, ere he had time to attempt a second break, met two or three couple of hounds, and was chopped.

I saw the flushing of Lord Clydesdale's cheek, and the kindling of his eye, as he advanced towards the unhappy offender, for whom I expected nothing less than the outpouring of awakened ire in this first moment of sudden disappointment. What I had looked for, however, did not take place. Lord Clydesdale riding up, and doffing his hat severely low, merely said,

"Sir, I brought my hounds here to-day in the hope of showing sport to a large field, but you have disappointed my purpose, and deprived us of a glorious run."

A soft answer turneth away wrath.

"My lord," replied the stranger, "I am extremely sorry most unintentionally to have caused disappointment to any one, but above all to yourself, to whom the whole country is so greatly indebted."

Every symptom of displeasure instantly vanished from the features and manner of Lord Clydesdale, and so, I am sure, did every feeling of it from his heart. He bowed his acknowledgments very gracefully, and saying, "We may be so fortunate as to find again," sprang from his horse, and was in the midst of his hounds in a moment.

It had all passed in half a minute, and was a striking instance of gentlemanly feeling on both sides. The stranger was no sportsman, but he was something far beyond it. And it were greatly to be wished that all, who sorely try the temper and patience of the master of the pack, and mar in one way or another the sport of the field, would bear in mind on whom the whole responsibility rests, of sending home some fifty or a hundred men in good humour with themselves, their wives, and their respective circles, and would show, as is most justly due to him, a kind and considerate courtesy and forbearance.

There was nothing afterwards to redeem the promise of

the morning. Late in the afternoon we found another fox, but the day had turned off, cold storms were in the air, and an hour's slow hunting having satisfied us that we should never come to any better terms with our wily foe, the hounds were whipped off. Lord Clydesdale returned to Atherstone, and the rest of us to our several homes. I believe it was a fortunate circumstance for myself that the day so ended, for I was yet hardly in a condition for the exertions of a severe run.

And now Beechwood began to be no longer what it once had been to me. The fact was, that I was myself changed. Nothing pleased me as it used to do, and this morbid feeling increased upon me day by day. True, my recovery under the kind nursing of my dear sister, and the skill of my friend, Mr. Howard, was now all but complete. True, I was now more comfortable in my mind from being unburdened of a secret which I had always felt a weight upon my conscience, and of which I had always anticipated the discovery. True that, in the eyes of the world, I had acquitted myself in the late transaction as a man of honour. The police report, too, of what had passed before the magistrates at Exeter, so far as Ellen Darnley and myself were concerned, had been favourably commented upon in the newspapers, and by one journal had been worked up into quite an interesting and romantic narrative. Why then was I not happy? One answer at least naturally suggested itself—the Cranstouns were no longer here. When I awoke in the morning, no hope of meeting Fanny during the day made my heart bound, and my spirits gay. Every letter which came excited me, but the feverish hope it gave birth to as quickly subsided, as the effects of a stone cast into troubled waters.

At length, on the Friday in this week, a letter arrived

from Fanny to my sister. I believe it made both our hearts beat quicker. Jane went to the window to read it, and then gave it to me, and left the room. It was as follows:—

“MY DEAREST JANE,

“YOU know that I have been ill, and that nothing less than this would have prevented my thanking you long since for two very kind letters I have received from you. I found myself unwell on my first arrival in town, and have since been ill of fever, but I am thankful to add that I am now suffering only from languor and debility.

“HENRY has told me from time to time of your brother’s progress towards recovery, but I fear he has spared me much of his sad sufferings. I never would have believed that my cousin could have been guilty of such a cruel and wicked act. But I trust that he is truly ashamed of, and penitent for, his conduct, and that his temper is more in fault than his heart. And your brother has forgiven him; I have formed an erroneous opinion of his character, if he have not. We have all much to be forgiven. And it will redound so much the more to the honour of your brother’s behaviour throughout, of which the public journals speak in such high and merited terms.

“BUT what is this other subject they are so full of—gipsies and sheep-stealers, and a beautiful girl? I am quite puzzled, and anxious to know what it is all about. So pray satisfy my curiosity when next you write, which I hope will be soon. You know that I have a great love of the marvellous.

“HENRY is making preparations for his departure to the Continent. Mr. Dastard was to have accompanied him, but I understand does not now intend to leave England.

"This is the first letter I have written, and I am not at present equal to a longer. Will you be so good to assure your father and brother how gratefully I remember all their kindness to me when at dear Beechwood. And, with sincerest regard for yourself,

"Believe me, dearest Jane,

"Ever your affectionate Friend,

"FANNY CRANSTOUN."

"Berkeley Square."

This letter caused me feelings both of pleasure and pain. I could not fail to be much gratified by the interest which Fanny so kindly expressed for me; but then what she said about her cousin annoyed me, and gave rise to all sorts of tormenting suspicions, and for the rest of the morning I was irritable and ill at ease. I took up a book and read page after page, but without comprehending one word of their contents. At last I threw away the volume in disgust, and went to take a solitary stroll among the beautiful walks of Beechwood.

In the evening, Mr. Howard dined with us, and communicated the pleasing intelligence that he was removing to Exeter, on a very advantageous offer which had been made him.

"It is barely a week since," said he, "that I received a letter from the eminent surgeon who, by Mr. Henry Cranstoun's friendly direction, visited Mr. Herbert Anneslie, offering to take me as a partner. The proposal was made in the most gratifying manner, and two or three letters have since passed between us. The arrangements are now complete, and on terms the most suitable to my circumstances, and the most agreeable to my inclinations, for the only capital required of me is a willingness to labour, and to take the

most active and practical part of the business. It is not without regret, I assure you, that I leave the pleasant village of Beechwood and its inhabitants; but that regret is much diminished by the reflection that I shall still be at no great distance from them—that I shall carry away with me the remembrance of their great kindness, to be an incentive and support under the anxious duties of my profession, and that my best services will still be within their reach, and always at their command.

“Mr. Herbert Anneslie,” he continued, turning himself towards me, and extending his hand, “I shall always consider that I owe my promotion and my fortune to you.”

Mr. Howard then told us that, having secured the services of a successor, who, he had every reason to believe, would be acceptable to his friends at Beechwood, he was to enter upon this new sphere of his professional duties on the following Monday.

Having received our hearty congratulations, and the sincere expression of our best wishes, he shook us all cordially by the hand, and bade us good night.

As a professional man, I cannot more justly describe Mr. Howard's character than by that highest commendation which belongs only to the most eminent of the faculty in their several generations, and which constitutes the very perfection of their art—he possessed, in a remarkable degree, the *suaviter in modo*, the *fortiter in re*; that courteous and gentle sympathy in a sick room, which so wins and soothes the sufferer; that quick and intuitive insight into the patient's case, and that decision in acting upon it, on which life itself so frequently depends. Nor was he less distinguished by those generous and liberal sentiments which the great and the good in every profession possess, and in none

more than in the higher departments of surgery and medicine.

The truth is, that in Mr. Howard a naturally amiable disposition, and very superior abilities, had been improved by the inestimable advantage of a highly liberal education. His father was a beneficed clergyman of the Church of England, but dying when his son was about nine years of age, his widow took up her residence in the neighbourhood of a large town, where was an endowed school, of considerable celebrity, to which every boy might claim admission whose parents lived within sound of the school bell. Here our young student made such proficiency in the Greek and Latin classics—those mollifiers and expanders of men's minds—that his learned master often and loudly expressed his indignation that such acquirements should be thrown away, and that so fine a scholar as Mr. Howard should go into the profession of physic, or, as the old gentleman was fond of terming it, do nothing but beat a pestle and mortar. On this profession, however, Mr. Howard was bent, and accordingly entered it with that ardour and devotedness so indispensable to eminence in any vocation of life.

"What a fortunate circumstance, dear Herbert," said Jane, "that you should have been the means of placing Mr. Howard in a position worthy of his abilities!"

"Yes, dear Jane," I replied, "and Herbert Anneslie is another instance, what a mere instrument man is even in the good which is effected through him."

Jane coloured, as she remembered the duel.

My father observed it, and said, "Herbert was thinking, Jane, of One who brings good out of evil, and makes the wrath of man to praise him. But it is indeed, as you say, a great change from the small circuit of a little village and its

neighbourhood, to Exeter and all the extensive practice to which it will immediately introduce him."

"It reminds me," I said, "of what I have heard asserted, that every man has, once in his life, the opportunity of greatly advancing himself, and of making his fortune; of which Lord Eldon, Sir William Scott, and Mr. Erskine, once a sailor, and now, I am told, the most eloquent advocate at the bar, are living and striking examples."

"And I think," said my father, "the calculation on similar authority is, that ninety-nine out of every hundred, through want of presence of mind, inactive and indolent habits, or the indulgence of sensual pleasure, allow the golden opportunity to pass by them unimproved. Eldon, Erskine, Scott, with some few others—of whom I would particularly mention the present learned and excellent Bishop of St. David's, Dr. Burgess—are honoured and distinguished exceptions."

CHAPTER XVII.

AND now the anxious day was at hand. The commission was to be opened at Exeter on Saturday afternoon. And as on the Monday I should probably be obliged to appear in court, it was necessary to repair to the scene of action on the first-mentioned day.

Long before we reached the city, we had many manifest tokens of the busy spectacle we were to witness there. Horsemen, and carriages, and carts, and pedestrians were continually passing or being passed by us, each person as pushing and important as if nothing could be done until he had arrived. The loud talk and the loud laugh spoke hearts

full of glee and merriment, and it almost needed our own individual feelings and experience to realize the fact that we were not going on some occasion of revelry and entertainment, but on one of life and death. As we approached within a mile of the suburbs the crowd was very great, and, whilst we were a little at a stand in consequence, we suddenly were conscious of a bustle behind us, and heard a call to make way for the High Sheriff; who, in a magnificent coach with four handsome bays and servants in the richest liveries—the whole *turn-out*, as it would seem, new for the occasion—ambled by us in that easy and noiseless way that men of fortune in London-built carriages do.

We found all Exeter in excitement. On alighting at the hotel, a servant in livery, respectfully taking off his hat, asked me if I was Mr. Herbert Anneslie; and on my answering in the affirmative, put a note with my address into my hand, and again touching his hat, retired within the crowd, before I had time to break the seal, or to inquire from whom he came. The note was in the following words:—

“Mr. Stanley presents his compliments to Mr. Herbert Anneslie, and being now at the sea-side, ventures to express a hope that Mr. Anneslie and his family will do a brother fox-hunter the honour to occupy his house during their stay in Exeter. The enclosed card will direct to the street and the number.”

We were all, of course, greatly surprised by this extraordinary instance of kindness and interest taken in us by a stranger, and were at a loss how to act. We determined, however, to repair to the house indicated to us by the card, and were received at the door by a neatly-dressed female, who civilly anticipated any inquiry on our part by saying, “Mr. Herbert Anneslie, I believe?” Nothing could be more

comfortable than we found our quarters likely to be. Indeed they were to the eye something more than this, the rooms being very spacious and most handsomely furnished. Two sitting-rooms were set apart for our use, and three best bed-rooms, with one for a servant, whom, however, we had not brought. The female who had admitted us mentioned to Jane, that the family had left for the sea-side rather unexpectedly on the previous day; and that she was instructed to say from her master and mistress, that they hoped Mr. Anneslie and his friends would consider the house as their own during the ensuing week, and would give their orders as to their own household.

The only thing to be done was to accept the friendly offer in the same spirit of frankness in which it had been made. One kind friend I found here before me; for there was a remarkably good engraving, handsomely framed, of Lord Clydesdale on horseback, with his pack a little in the distance, and one or two of his favourite hounds by his side:—a further intimation to me that there was at least one feeling in common between our host and myself—a passion for fox-hunting—and I felt myself at home.

Whilst my father and Jane sat down to rest and to warm themselves in the drawing-room in front of a blazing fire, I went out into the city to see what was going forward. On coming within sight of the hotel to which we had first driven, I saw the carriage and suite of the High Sheriff just on the point of setting off to meet the judges, and to escort them into the city. The cortège was not so gorgeous as on such occasions it usually is; for the worthy baronet, thinking rather what good he could do, than what show he could make, instead of engaging for his javelin-men the stalwarth-looking, well-trained fellows of the city, who commonly officiated, had

requested the clergyman of his parish to select a certain number of the most industrious and best conducted young men of the labouring class; and instead of equipping them in his own livery, cut after the fashionable mode, had dressed them in blue frock coats and trousers of warm substantial cloth, with Wellington boots and new beaver hats, which might all be useful to them for a longer time and a better purpose than the mere pageantry of an assize week. They did not, perhaps, bear themselves with heads quite so erect, nor march so nearly of a height, nor step so well together; and their gait, it may be, had a little in it of the rural; but then their shoulders were broad, and their arms were brawny, and there was a frank and fearless look in their bronzed and sun-burnt features, and they carried their white wands upright, if not with civic grace; and although many a citizen winked to his fellow, and smiled at them after they had passed, I would not have been the one who should have dared to have done it before their face, or to have called their personal prowess into question.

As the procession was about to move, a thought came across me that I should like to see all the ceremony and solemnities of this important occasion, when the ermined representatives of majesty come bearing the balances and the sword, to award justice between man and man, to right the injured and oppressed, and to punish the evil doers. So I mixed myself with the crowd. The next moment the high sheriff passed from the door of the hotel to his coach. He was arrayed in ancient costume—the court dress of one of his ancestors a century or two back. The coat was much embroidered with silver lace, with flap-pockets commencing below the hips. The breeches were of sky blue, buttoned and buckled at the knee. The stockings were of

white silk, and on the highly-polished shoes were large handsome silver buckles. Fastened to the hair behind was a black silk bow, hanging down between the shoulders. And at the left side was a silver-hilted sword, of curious workmanship, with which (with all deference he is spoken) the wearer seemed scarcely to know what to do. Next followed the chaplain, in full canonicals and with a shovel hat. The door of the carriage being shut, and the window drawn up, the cavalcade moved off; and the horses not going beyond a fast pace, I and some five or six hundred other gapers and gazers, who had not the good fortune to be mounted, as some scores were, ranged ourselves on foot on either side.

Having proceeded in this manner about two miles, we suddenly saw on the brow of a hill about a mile distant, and descending at a rapid rate, a carriage and four. Instantly there was a sensation, and a halt, and a bustle among us. The high sheriff's carriage was wheeled round; the horsemen moved again to the reversed front; the crowd of pedestrians were requested to stand aside; the high sheriff and his chaplain alighted; and the coach-door being left open and the steps down, the representatives of royalty (the sole of whose foot, on these state occasions, must not touch the ground) having driven up at a foaming and reeking pace, and drawn up just opposite, stepped with becoming dignity from the one carriage to the other; the high sheriff and the chaplain resumed their places, only now with their backs to the horses; and the procession returned to the city in ceremonious solemnity, just to give the learned judges time to recover breath, after the killing rate at which they had been previously travelling.

So ended this first act of the judicial drama. I was glad

to have been present, and returned to retail what I had witnessed to my father and Jane. Our little dinner was served up to us exquisitely dressed, but we could none of us get rid of the anxieties of Monday; and poor Ellen Darnley cast a dark shade over all that we said, or did, or thought. Whether she had yet arrived in Exeter, we had no means of ascertaining.

The hospitality we were so comfortably experiencing from perfect strangers to us, formed, of course, one subject of our thoughts and conversation; and we came to the conclusion that there was more of kind and generous sympathy in the world than, in our ascetic moments, we were disposed to believe.

"But I expect," said my father, "that we shall some day find out the secret key, which has opened to us so unlooked-for a reception in a land where we are such unwilling sojourners."

"Perhaps," I observed, "it is some one who is acquainted with the altered circumstances in which we have been placed; who knows that we are inhabiting only a small cottage, instead of the ancient manor-house at Beechwood, and who thinks that the affair which has brought us here may entail some inconvenient expenses."

"Or else," said Jane, "it may be some kind heart which feels for your own unpleasant position, Herbert; and who, perhaps, knowing how ill you have lately been, may think that you require more quiet and comfort than you could hope to obtain either at an inn or in lodgings."

"Well," rejoined my father, "it is probably something of this kind. Do you remember, Herbert, the reflection of the tempest-tossed wanderer to his companion in the temple at Carthage, when they saw represented on the painted walls

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the scenes of sorrow through which they had passed,—‘Take courage, my friend, for even here are some who feel an interest in the sufferings of humanity?’ Herbert is smiling, Jane—I suppose at my associating him and myself with the faithful Achates and the pious Æneas. But I would have him remember that all on whom fortune frowns are sworn brothers for the time, that hunger and thirst bring all men to a level, and that neither he nor I have ever wanted a dinner so sorely as the king and his courtier did; and therefore it is no disparagement to them, dear Herbert, to allude to their courage and constancy in much more difficult circumstances than our own, nor amiss to take for our own motto that noble sentiment which supported and animated them,—‘Persevere in the path of duty, and we shall some day see happier times.’”

And so we chatted away until bedtime.

The next morning we attended divine service in the cathedral. The entrance of the judges was certainly an imposing spectacle, and we were standing where we could see all the circumstances of ceremony which took place on the occasion.

Their lordships, in their ample robes of scarlet cloth, trimmed with ermine, and in full flowing wigs, the elaborate curls of which depended far down on either side, having alighted from the High Sheriff’s coach, attended by that distinguished officer of the executive with his white wand, and the chaplain, in his gown and cassock, and scarf, proceeded up the nave with slow step and dignified demeanour. Before them walked the mayor and corporation in their official dress, preceded by three beaules, bearing the ponderous insignia of civic authority. At the same time were seen advancing from the other end the members of the

chapter, the vergers in front carrying a small silver mace. At their head walked the bishop, in his lawn-sleeved robes; after him the dean in his surplice, with scarlet hood; then the canons and prebendaries, two and two; then the priest-vicars, next the singing men, and lastly the choristers. About the centre of the nave the two processions met. The mayor and corporation opening their ranks, the bishop advanced a step, bowed low to the judges, who as lowly returned the obeisance, then turned himself round, as did the other members of the cathedral body, and all moved slowly onward into the choir, where the vergers conducted the bishop to his throne, the chapter to their rightful stalls, and the judges to their appropriated seats.

It was altogether a very interesting and impressive scene. It consisted only of externals, indeed, but the mind of man is wholesomely affected by externals, which act as pioneers, and help to open the way to other and higher things. When externals shall have been removed from among us, (if unhappily the growing spirit of democracy and misrule shall ever so far prevail,) the ancient and venerated institutions of church and state will have been swept away too, and with them the essentials of religion, and the glory and stability of England—which heaven forefend!

Other things there were which were not externals, but on which I do not enter here.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WE all rose early on the following morning after a night of feverish excitement and restless and broken slumbers, little refreshing to any of us. On my own account there was no further occasion for anxiety, than a public exhibition in a court of justice must necessarily give rise to. But poor Ellen Darnley's case filled us with the most painful solicitude. She was never a moment from my thoughts; and I felt that I would gladly have exchanged positions with her so far as merely personal considerations were concerned—that is, could my father and sister have been unaffected by it, and I not lowered in Fanny Cranstoun's estimation—and have encountered all the consequences of punishment and disgrace to have saved her from them. For at the very moment that I could not conceive any just or probable grounds for the apprehensions which so distressed me, I had a vague and indescribable presentiment of some unfavourable issue of the trial.

After a hasty and unsocial breakfast we prepared to set out for the court, having determined to walk, as the distance was but short. The streets were very busy. The javelin-men were mustering from their several quarters with their white wands. And before we had reached the doors of the hall of judgment, we heard the trumpeters playing, in sad dissonance with the solemn and anxious feelings incident to the occasion, the merry tune—"Begone, dull care."*

* No fiction this.

It was about half-past nine o'clock, and the court was already densely crowded. The judge's seat was vacant, but around a large mahogany table, below, and in front of it, were seated a number of very imposing-looking personages, dressed in black gowns, long bands, and wigs of various forms, with purple stuff bags before them, full of papers, whilst several books were lying here and there on the table. Two or three were talking loudly to each other, some were whispering, and a few looking over their briefs. There was also loud conversation going on in the gallery, and in other parts of the court, and I thought that I had never heard such a hubbub before.

Presently, just as the city clock was striking ten, there was a slight movement in the vicinity of the judge's seat. "Silence!" shouted a man with a stentorian voice, and immediately a perfect stillness succeeded to the noise and confusion which had been but a moment ago. The judge then entered, preceded by the high sheriff, and took his seat on the bench, the latter occupying a chair to the right of his lordship, and Lord Clydesdale another to the left.

My father and Mr. Waldy (the latter of whom at this moment made his appearance) sat a little behind the high sheriff. A few ladies also were accommodated with chairs on either side of the bench; but I was relieved by not seeing either Lady Clydesdale or Miss De Vere. My sister had determined to await the issue in a room adjoining the court.

It had been decided that the cause in which we were so unhappily interested should come on for trial the first on this day. Accordingly, Henry Cooper and Thomas Cooper were brought to the bar. Immediately afterwards, Ellen

Darnley was led in and placed beside them. She was dressed in a plain black silk frock, and a cap simply trimmed with black ribbon. All eyes were instantly turned towards her. There was a murmuring and a motion throughout the assembled spectators, like the sound and the swell of the rising surge when the hollow winds begin to blow. Some were reaching over, others bending their heads this way and that, to catch a glimpse of her features. Curiosity was in every countenance succeeded by admiring and astonished looks, which again changed in a moment into those of the deepest commiseration. I saw Lord Clydesdale fix his eyes upon her with an expression of the most lively interest. Jury and barristers shared in the general and generous sympathy. The judge regarded her with a keen and penetrating glance, and directing that she should be placed at the greatest possible distance from the other prisoners, bent down his eyes to the papers before him with surely the most sad and compassionate look that ever beamed from the bench.

Henry Cooper was arraigned on his own confession for having, on the night of Nov. 19th, 1805, feloniously killed and stolen a sheep, the property of William Lomas, of the parish of Wapton, in the county of Devon.

A similar indictment was also found against *Thomas Cooper*.

Ellen Darnley was charged with having been an accessory both before and after the fact to the feloniously killing and stealing a sheep.

Henry Cooper, having been admitted as approver, was removed from the dock, and given into the charge of a constable, to be forthcoming when called for. All witnesses

in this cause were commanded to leave the court; consequently, I and others retired.

The counsel for the prosecution then arose and addressed the jury.

He commenced by saying that during a long and, he might add, an extensive, practice at the bar, he had never been so painfully engaged in the duties of his profession as at this moment. "Ours is often an irksome office," he observed, "often an invidious and unpopular one. Sometimes, indeed, it is our glorious privilege to request the operation of the law, in order to avenge the wronged and oppressed, and to give to right its due ascendancy over the insolence of power, however highly seated and armed with triple mail; and then we carry with us the feelings and the sympathies of the court, and every pleader knows the value of this. But not unfrequently, Justice comes before us with such a hobbling gait, and so meanly dressed, so stern of countenance, so repulsive in manner, and altogether so ungainly in appearance; whilst there is something externally so fair and amiable and engaging in the doer of the wrong, that principle gives way to feeling, and reason to the affections; and the pleader finds the favour and the prejudice so strong against him, that he becomes himself dispirited and disgusted, and regards even success with dissatisfaction.

"And never was such a case more strongly exhibited than in the present instance. Do you imagine, gentlemen of the jury, that I can be insensible to the fact that I am standing alone in this crowded court, without one eye beaming kindly upon me, without one individual who is not impatient at the very duty I am performing, and secretly—

may avowedly, as far as looks can speak—desiring that I may so ill acquit myself of it, as that you, gentlemen of the jury, may be involved in the most awful consequences of giving a verdict contrary to fact, and therefore contrary to what the sacred cause of truth and justice demand at your hands. And be not offended, gentlemen, if I warn and impress upon you that these consequences would be no less than the sending you back to your several homes perjured and dishonoured, with the goading remembrance of it through all your subsequent life, and the reflection that under the burden of this charge you must hereafter appear, and answer it at a higher tribunal. Be not indignant, gentlemen, at the bare mention of such a case. I am addressing not yourselves, but those amiable weaknesses which are inherent within us all, and which prevail the most in the most generous minds. I should be sorry indeed, not myself to have experienced the influences of those weaknesses. I should be sorry indeed, not to be able to aver that I am a man of like passions with yourselves. And, in good earnest, so busy and intriguing do I find these erring affections within me, that were there not a higher and constraining power to overrule them, I might perhaps desire to exchange briefs with my brother counsel, or to take my stand by his side, and to advocate with him the cause of his client, and appeal to your feelings instead of your conscience, and urge upon you to be *compassionate* where you ought to be *just*. But, gentlemen, both the advocate and the jury must lose sight of every other object, and every other motive in the investigation of truth. It is finely represented in ancient and heathen mythology, that when wickedness had so overrun and corrupted the earth as to have driven all other deities

from the polluted soil, the goddess who presided over justice still lingered behind, and by her presence and the sanctifying influence of her principles over the minds of men, prevented their entire abandonment, and the utter and immediate extinction of the whole human race. In proportion, then, as iniquity and impiety now prevail and taint the very air we breathe, let justice be honoured and worshipped, and supplicated to remain amongst us. The last spot upon earth from which she must be permitted to withdraw, are the hallowed courts where her altars stand; and the last individuals who must violate her laws, or desecrate her purity, are those whose high commission it is to vindicate her rights, and to deliver her verdicts, and give judgment at her tribunals. And if I be worthy to maintain her just prerogatives, or to fill any office in the ministration of her decrees, I must be ready and willing, and able to lay aside every other consideration, and to divest myself of all human weakness, and to feel neither sympathy nor affection, which would be at variance with her dictates. And so schooled do I hope I am in her severe but salutary discipline, so do I trust that I can obey that teaching which it has taken me a life to learn, as to be able to discharge my present painful office unswayed, though not unmoved, by the interest and compassion which I feel in common with every one around me, for the female prisoner at the bar."

The learned counsel then proceeded to give a general outline of his case, as afterwards sworn to more in detail by Henry Cooper, the approver, and was in substance—

"That at the date of the offence stated in the indictment, the female prisoner, Ellen Darnley, had been with the camp of gipsies, to which he (Henry Cooper) and his brother,

Thomas Cooper, belonged, about six months;—that she had been left with them ill by another tribe, and that they were recommended to look sharp after her, because she was rather wildish;—that she soon got better, and was very saucy and frolicsome, and no better than she should be;—that they both took a liking to her, but that she was fondest of Tom;—that she was always wanting money of them to buy finery;—that one day, when she was teasing them very much, Tom said that she couldn't have any more without they stole a sheep or two, and sold the skins;—that she asked, why then didn't they steal some, for there were plenty about, and no one would miss them;—that if they were men they wouldn't make such a bother about it; and, in short, she must have money, or else she would set off and leave them;—that they had, in consequence, stolen several at various times and places, and that she, Ellen Darnley, always received the value of the skins, which they had a ready means of disposing of;—that it was settled they should steal another, on the night mentioned in the indictment, from a fold which they had marked during the day;—that as deponent was returning late that afternoon from the Cromwell Head, he met with a young lad, who said his name was Herbert Anneslie, and found a ring upon him, which he thought would please Ellen, and keep her quiet, and so he took it; and then he made up his mind to take the lad too, for fear his friends, when he got home, should send the constables out;—that the lad remained in the camp the greater part of the night;—that deponent being on the look out late in the evening, saw a gentleman's servant with two horses, and supposed him to be in search of the lad, and went back to the camp to tell this;—that it was settled

they should move further away;—that Ellen Darnley went up to Tom as he was going, and told him to be sure not to come back without the sheep;—that when they had set up their tents again, deponent went to the fold to Tom, and helped to carry the dead sheep into the wood, and then went on himself to the camp to see about the lad, and found him asleep some way off from the tents;—that presently Tom came in with the sheep, and that Ellen said, 'There's a brave fellow!'—that Tom was very angry when he found the lad still there, Ellen Darnley having said that she would take care and send him far enough off;—that he verily believes Tom would have killed the lad, but going up to him he found him asleep;—that they then all hid the sheep in the bushes, and presently went to supper, and had plenty of grog, and were very merry;—that deponent then took the ring out of his pocket, and told them that it belonged to the lad who was sleeping yonder, but that Ellen should have it, if she would only be as kind to him as she was to Tom;—that afterwards he and the others fell asleep, and that when they awoke the lad was gone;—that a few days after this, Ellen Darnley having gone to buy something at a village some miles off, brought back with her a handbill offering a reward of £20 for the discovery of those who had stolen the sheep; and that she said she would go and tell of them, and then she should have plenty of money;—that their old mother, since dead, then recommended to give her the ring if she would swear not to tell of them; and so they gave her the ring, and she swore to them never to say anything about the sheep;—that two or three days afterwards she left them without their being aware; and that they went away themselves as fast as they could, and

had never seen or heard of her since until this matter broke out."

The counsel for the prosecution next briefly stated the evidence which would be brought forward in support of the charge against the female prisoner, (for to this we are confining ourselves,) and concluded his address, the tone of which plainly showed that he believed the charge to be true, something in the following words:—

"Such, gentlemen of the jury, is the substance of the confession of Henry Cooper, the approver. The evidence of an accomplice is always to be received with great caution, and is indeed very unsafe to rely on, unless corroborated by other testimony, or by some very marked circumstances. In the confession of the approver, however, there appears a consistency and connectedness which give it very much the air of truth, and in many important particulars it will be substantiated by the unquestionable evidence of other witnesses. Even where it is not so substantiated, it must not on that account be altogether rejected. You must bear in mind, that when we have recourse to the evidence of an accomplice, it necessarily implies that we have not sufficient to attain the ends of justice without it; and the same absence of other testimony will frequently leave the evidence of the approver without direct confirmation. It will be for you, gentlemen of the jury, impartially to consider the circumstances which shall be detailed, to give facts their due importance, and where these shall have been clearly established, to weigh well what credit is to be paid to the statement of the approver on points connected with these facts, though unconfirmed by any direct testimony. Reasonable motives may have their consideration in the minds of reasonable

men. If a thief gives a valuable ring to a young girl, it may reasonably be presumed that he did not do so without some equivalent in return: if a young girl accepts such a ring, knowing it to have been stolen, it cannot fail to be, whilst unexplained, a most weighty consideration against her; and then honest men may determine what credence they will allow to the thief's assertion, that she was all along a party to what they were doing, and that the ring was given to her as a bribe not to disclose the crime to which she was privy, and to which she had been the instigator. I have only to observe further, that this crime of sheep-stealing has increased of late years to such an extent, as imperiously to call for the strong arm of the law to restrain it; and that young females are often found to be deeply implicated in it, of which you have had proofs in many recent cases in this very county. Gentlemen, you are to divest yourselves of all feelings and considerations, which do not properly belong to the case submitted to your judgment. As good men and true, engaged in a most important service to your country and to society at large, and sworn to decide according to the evidence brought before you, without fear and without favour, it is yours to return such a verdict as shall prove you worthy of the high trust which the law reposes in you."

Charles Grace, landlord of the Cromwell Head, swore to the prisoners at the bar, Thomas Cooper and Ellen Darnley, having been in his house about the middle of the day, on the 19th of November, 1805; was able to swear to the circumstance and the day, in consequence of the great stir which was made immediately afterwards about the stealing of the sheep, and the gipsies being suspected. Knew

Thomas Cooper, from having frequently seen him in his house. Had never seen Ellen Darnley, excepting on that occasion; but no one, who had once seen, could ever forget her.

Two witnesses swore, also, to having seen Thomas Cooper and Ellen Darnley near the wood towards the evening of the day in question.

I was the next person summoned to the witness box. Being desired to state what had happened to me on the occasion, and what I had witnessed in the camp of the gipsies, I narrated what the reader is long since acquainted with; my evidence as to facts confirming, to the manifest astonishment of all present, the testimony given by the approver. But I took care to express my conviction that I owed my life to Ellen Darnley.

The counsel for the Crown then addressed me: "Mr. Herbert Anneslie, Ellen Darnley is said to have received the ring which was taken from you. It appears that you have known her since. It is stated in the depositions before the magistrates, that you were in her company at the time the warrant was served upon her. Have you ever asked her anything about the ring?"

"Never!"

"What! was a ring violently taken from you by one of the gang to which she belonged, and you have frequently seen and conversed with her since, and you never mentioned the subject to her?"

"I never did mention the subject to her."

"There is something very mysterious in this. You stated in your evidence, that, on the night you were in the camp, Henry Cooper took the said ring out of his pocket, and made

a show of offering it to Ellen Darnley, saying at the same time that he had taken it from the lad yonder, meaning yourself. She was, therefore, nearer to the speaker than you were; must she not have seen and heard this?"

"Yea."

"And yet you have never spoken to her, nor conversed with her about it?"

"Never."

"Then, sir, you know something about the ring, I imagine, which has not yet come before the court. Have you ever seen or heard of the ring, since the night on which you were robbed of it?"

I felt the blood rush up to my face, and then as suddenly leave it again. The eyes of the judge, the counsel, the jury, the whole court, were fixed upon me. I paused, but it was only for an instant. I answered,

"I have seen it since."

"Where did you see it? in whose possession?"

"I saw it in the library of Mr. Waldy, at Beechwood."

"Can Mr. Waldy be produced?" inquired the judge.

"He was in court some time since, my lord," replied the counsel for the prosecution.

"Let him be sent for and his evidence be taken."

I looked at poor Ellen, and so did she at me, and with an expression so full of affectionate interest and compassion, that it was evident she was feeling at that moment more for me than for herself. It said as plainly as words could have done, "Do not grieve for what you have been compelled to say; I know what you are enduring on my account." A momentary glance upward spoke the rest.

The silence in court was breathless and intense.

Mr. Waldy entered the witness-box with a manner perfectly composed, but with great solemnity of look and demeanour, and his personal appearance was altogether very striking.

"You are acquainted with Ellen Darnley, I believe?" said the counsel for the crown.

"I am."

"You have been, sir, I understand, a very kind friend to her?"

Mr. Waldy made a slight inclination of his head, and replied, "She has proved herself well worthy of all I have ever done for her."

"Did she ever place a ring in your keeping?"

"She did."

"When was this?"

"About five years ago."

"Did she ever tell you how she came by it?"

"She has since told me that Thomas Cooper, one of the gipsies, had given it to her."

(Great sensation in the court).

"Where is the ring now?"

"I have it with me"—producing it at the same moment from his pocket.

I was then recalled, and asked if that were the same ring which Henry Cooper had taken from me, to which I replied that it was. It was a very beautiful diamond ring, for which my father had given, I believe, thirty or forty guineas.

We spare the reader any more minute details. The approver underwent a long cross-examination, conducted with great tact and ability by the counsel for the defence, but nothing contradictory in his evidence was elicited from him.

At this stage of the proceedings the judge intimated that he should adjourn the court for half an hour, during which the prisoner, Thomas Cooper, might retire in custody of the constables; the female prisoner would be in the care of Mrs. Thompson, whom he saw waiting to take charge of her.

There was then a general move, but without the noise and bustle usual on such occasions. All appeared oppressed with those anxious thoughts which create a reluctance to speak, and a kind of impatience of being spoken to. Mrs. Thompson came forward with a kindness of look and manner which showed how affectionately she regarded her beautiful and interesting charge. At the same moment an elderly gentleman, making his way through the crowd, approached, and respectfully throwing over Ellen's shoulders a plain but costly shawl, said in a low voice, that a lady in court had sent it to her, with a hope and request that she would accept and wear it for her sake.

I saw and heard it all, for at the moment of the adjournment I had hastened into the court. But I was fain to leave it again. My heart was full even to suffocation; and I rushed into the open air, that I might breathe more freely, and brace myself up for that which was yet to come.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN the court again assembled, I came just within the door. Ellen was in her former place wearing her shawl, which indeed must have been a great comfort to her, for the day was very cold, and the court at once close and chilly. In a few minutes the judge resumed his seat on the bench.

All appeared as if they had never moved. And each felt that, before they stirred again from their places, the fate of Ellen Darnley would be decided.

Amid the most profound silence, and an eager and anxious expectation, Ellen Darnley's counsel, almost overpowered for the moment by the impressiveness of the scene, slowly rose from his seat, and addressed the jury:—

“Gentlemen of the jury—If my brother on the other side felt and confessed his position in the present instance to be one of a most painful nature, in having to prosecute in a cause, where manifestly all the feelings and sympathies of a crowded and impatient, and yet a still and silent and almost breathless court were arrayed against him;—if, as we all were witnesses to, his own generous heart beat so high in unison with those around him, that it made common cause with them;—if eloquently advocating the sacred cause of justice and her inalienable rights, he yet would gladly have thrown up his brief, so little was it in accordance with the noble principles he was laying down;—if, as was his bounden duty, exerting his utmost efforts to obtain success to the cause entrusted to his pleading, he yet felt that to sustain defeat was the consummation he most desired;—if under these circumstances, in which he had so little at stake or at heart, my learned brother could not help expressing the painfulness of his present position;—judge, gentlemen of the jury, what mine must be, who see all this large and anxious assemblage *with* me, deeming me not simply the advocate of the young and interesting prisoner at the bar, but the champion of the cause which every one regards as his own—each expecting me to be his spokesman, and thinking that he is to find in my words utterance given to the sentiments and burning thoughts with difficulty pent up within his own

breast ;—what, gentlemen, must be my position, who, under the influence of all which interests, affects, agitates them, only in a more intense degree, and knowing that I can neither satisfy their expectations, nor realize my own sense of what is due from me on this occasion, have everything at heart, and everything at stake. Happily, however, the case itself requires little at the advocate's hands. For surely never had my friend, as counsel for the crown, to bring before a jury of his country, a charge so weak, so utterly unsubstantial, so palpably improbable and absurd, and in support of which the only evidence attempted to be adduced is that of a perjured man, by his own confession a plunderer of the helpless traveller, and a prowling thief of the night. Yet am I not without anxiety lest a cause, in itself so just and irreproachable, should suffer from the weakness or indiscreetness of my advocacy. For my client must depart hence—or at my door will lie the blame,—not only proved to be guiltless of the crime imputed to her, not only unimpaired in the estimation of this court, of which she is confessedly the centre of universal attraction and regard; not only with the unabated sympathy and deep and affectionate interest in her which beams from every eye, and throbs in every bosom; not only without so much of the merest tinge and shade of wrong, as that the tongue even of the wickedest and the most watchful for malice and mischief shall not move itself against her;—but as one, who, in the very atmosphere of vice, has been ever pure as innocence itself; and who, in circumstances of the greatest difficulty and danger, has evinced a prudence and a wisdom beyond her years, and a courage above her sex.

“Gentlemen, it is necessary for me to make you acquainted with the little history of my client. She is by

birth of that remarkable fraternity, whose kindred and sympathies and citizenship, are not bounded by channels, or seas, or mountains, or by any arbitrary or imaginary lines and limits, but who have a recognised brotherhood in every known country of the habitable globe. There is not a race of people less known, or I should rather say, more confounded in the imaginations of men, more entirely misunderstood, more injuriously misrepresented. They pass with us under the one indiscriminate designation of gipsies, and with the term we instantly associate cunning, thieving, falsehood, the utter absence of all domestic order, or moral restraint, foulness of every grade and kind, and roguery and vice in all their forms. We remember the vagabonds who have defrauded, and the impositions which have been practised upon us, and we class them altogether, as a worthless and wicked generation. But nothing could be more untrue or unjust. In moral purity, integrity of principle, honour and honesty in their dealings between man and man, conjugal, parental, filial fidelity and attachment, the higher castes of this fraternity are not excelled by any class in society, whatever their birth or parentage may be. Forming, however, as this singular race does, one vast community distinct from all the world besides, the different castes are distinguishable among themselves by different characteristics of habits, manners, customs, peculiarities of feature, mental and physical qualities and endowments. The circumstances pre-eminently distinctive of that caste, among which my client had her birth, are personal attractions, warmth and generosity of heart, an ardent and enthusiastic temperament, a fearlessness of danger, great acuteness of intellect, disinterestedness of conduct, and independence of spirit.

“When my client was about seven years of age, a lady

of fortune received her into her family almost on the same terms with her own children, but dying suddenly, left her unprovided for, and at the age of eleven, Ellen Darnley returned to live with her parents. On their decease, she was placed under the care of an aunt of the same tribe, who also dying, and she herself being too ill to accompany her friends on a long journey, important to them to undertake, she was left under the temporary charge of another tribe. Here the transactions are said to have taken place, which have been already detailed to you. Within a few days after this date, Ellen Darnley left the persons to whose care she had been committed, horrified, as well she might be, by what she had witnessed and experienced among them. Thence she found her way to Beechwood in this county, where Mr. Waldy, who had been under obligations to her parents in times past, was residing. This benevolent gentleman immediately took a warm interest in her welfare, at which no one here present will be surprised: and finding her to possess a superior mind and talents, gave her an education suitable to them. Since quitting the seminary at which she had boarded four years, she has been residing with a Mrs. Edwards, widow of an officer in the merchant service of the East India Company. From her protection she has been torn away on the preposterous charges on which she is now arraigned, the whole of the said charges depending solely on the credit of one man, with whose true and infamous character you have been made acquainted, and to whose oath you would give no credence on the most trifling matter, much less where the lives or reputation of others are at stake."

The counsel for the defence then proceeded to comment on the evidence of the approver, and of the other witnesses;

forcibly representing to the jury the prisoner's heroic and generous conduct in saving Herbert Anneslie's life at the risk probably of her own, and appealing to them if this were the act of one, so vain and so vicious as she was said to have been? He called their attention to her whole course of life, so far as there was any credible testimony respecting it, and appealed to them again, if ever there was known a conversion, so sudden and so entire, in all the annals of the human heart?

"The imputation of *motives*, therefore, even where *facts* are proved, I am perfectly persuaded, gentlemen of the jury, you will discard from your minds with indignation and contempt. You will not allow it to weigh even so much as the dust in the balance against the presumptive proof which you have a right, and are bound, to draw from the exemplary conduct of my client since, testified to you in the course of this trial on evidence the most unexceptionable and conclusive. Whatever may have been the circumstances attendant upon her receiving the ring, you will not believe them to have been at variance with the entire course of her life besides, nor consequently to have been of a nature to reflect in the smallest degree on her honour or her innocence. We need not look further for a cause or a motive, than the mere thoughtlessness of an inexperienced girl of the early age of fifteen, as ignorant of the value of the gift, as were manifestly the wretches from whom she received it. Unless indeed it were, that the ring was forced upon her with a view to those purposes of ill, with which they threatened her when she left them, and which one of them is now endeavouring to effect through the malicious accusations which he has brought against her."

* * * * *

"And now my anxious duties on this most anxious occasion, however imperfectly discharged, are at an end. Others have yet theirs to perform. You, gentlemen of the jury, will not allow innocence to be oppressed, or villainy to be triumphant. And yours it is"—turning round in a very feeling manner to the crowded court—"to hold Ellen Darnley's reputation dear to yourselves, and to believe it still to be unblemished; to spurn every base charge and vile insinuation which a false tongue has dared to utter; and by your generous confidence in her integrity, but not more generous than just, to pour balm into her wounds, and to speak peace to a troubled spirit.

"To herself, I say—'Commit thy way unto the Lord, and put thy trust in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. He shall make thy righteousness as clear as the light, and thy just dealing as the noonday.'"

The summing up of the judge—who did not know so much of the truth as the reader and I do, and who was always afraid lest his kindly feelings should interfere with the conscientious discharge of his judicial duties—was in its tendency and effect unfavourable. He remarked on the caution with which the testimony of an accomplice should be received, and yet on the consistency of that of the approver, confirmed as it was, generally, by other evidence, particularly by that of Mr. Herbert Anneslie:—on the absence of witnesses in behalf of Ellen Darnley, prior to the date of the charges against her:—on the difficulty of reconciling the levity and criminality imputed to her at that period, with the strict propriety of conduct which she had evinced since; but then again on the extraordinary circumstance of her having accepted from such persons a valuable ring, knowing it to have been stolen, a contradiction quite as perplexing as the

other, and little supporting the high encomium passed on her by her counsel for integrity of principle and fearlessness of consequences:—that even her interposition in favour of Herbert Anneslie that night in the camp, ought not to be too highly rated, for that a female must have been hardened and abandoned indeed, who would not have risked something for the rescue of an innocent child who had fallen into such hands:—that it was scarcely credible that any person would be gratuitously guilty of any great act of wickedness, and therefore, to give every consideration its due weight—it was not conceivable what motive the approver could have for inventing these cruel charges against the prisoner; but it was conceivable how a young girl might be vain and flighty, and fond of dress, as she is alleged to have been, and how she, who would accept a stolen ring, might have instigated others to the commission of offences, by means of which her own desires were to be gratified:—that the jury must not be led away from the point on which alone they were to give their verdict, and which had reference to the prisoner, not as she now appeared before them, an educated female, advanced to a higher position in society, and under the care of those whose counsels would guide, and whose authority could control her—but as, what at that time in fact she unhappily was, the inmate of a gipsy camp, surrounded by vicious companions, and having no other example before her eyes than profligacy and guilt.

It is not possible to describe the anxiety and excitement which prevailed throughout the court during the absence of the jury; and when the latter had resumed their places, and the foreman stood ready to deliver their verdict, each held his breath for fear.

“How say you of Ellen Darnley, gentlemen? guilty, or not guilty?” asked the clerk of the arraigns.

To which the foreman replied, "We find Ellen Darnley guilty, as an accessory, but we earnestly recommend her to mercy, both on account of her youth at the time, and her excellent conduct since."

My eyes were fixed upon Ellen at this terrible moment, and so was every eye in the court. I could see that her spirit remained unsubdued, but that the poor feeble frame was becoming worn and exhausted. "Poor girl!" "Poor Ellen!" were low but distinct exclamations, which I heard rising up in every direction around me. In the midst of them, a young voice was heard, crying out in the most anxious and vehement tones, "She's not guilty! she's not guilty! I'm sure she's not guilty!" All eyes were instantly turned towards the place whence the sounds came, which was near the centre of the raised seats appropriated to the more aristocratic portion of the audience. Several persons around the spot were whispering, "Hush! hush!" and two or three stood up and closed together, evidently with a design of screening from observation this little disturber of the grave propriety of the scene. But it was in vain. Pushing his way through all opposers, and struggling to free himself from those who would have held him back, a beautiful boy of about eleven years of age riveted the eyes and admiration of the court, and even Ellen was for a moment forgotten. His light auburn hair curled in rich profusion of nature's own ringlets. His cheeks were flushed with something more than the bloom of health, and his large blue eyes, lighted up by the ardour of excited feelings, were directed towards the judge.

"Bring that boy here," said his lordship; and he was, accordingly, placed upon the table in front of the bench, surrounded by all the learned interpreters of the law, no-

thing daunted. The grave look of the judge, however, and the deep tones of his voice, effectually arrested his attention, and he seemed to feel, for the first time, some awe of the large wig and the scarlet robe. He stood silent.

"What is your name, my boy?" asked the judge.

"Arthur Stanley, sir."

"What is your father?"

"A gentleman and a foxhunter."

Lord Clydesdale smiled, and so, I suppose, did every one else in court, excepting the judge.

"Where does your father live?" inquired his lordship.

"In this city," was the reply, naming the street and the number, which, to my utter surprise, I recognised to be the house we were now occupying.

"Is your father in court now?"

"No, sir; but my grandpapa is."

"Now, young gentleman," said the judge, with a kind but firm manner, not to be resisted, "I must not allow the court to be interrupted in this way. I cannot greatly blame your feelings, but you must not let them get the better of you, as they have now done. I must give you a lesson, for which you may be the better all your life after. I must make you a prisoner."

His lordship was about to make signs to a gentleman, who was advancing towards the bar, when Lord Clydesdale said, "My lord, shall I take him under my charge?"

"I thank you, my Lord Clydesdale," replied the judge; then, adding in an under tone, which the boy could not hear, "I should like to place this noble young fellow in such honourable custody. I much mistake if he do not make a brave fox-hunter himself, one day."

"Come, my gallant boy," said Lord Clydesdale, holding

out his hand to the child, "let me take you to your grand-papa, who will, I dare say, meet us at the door."

With the utmost kindness, Lord Clydesdale then received his prisoner, and led him away by the hand; the little champion, with a free step and fearless air, turning round his head all the time he was leaving the court, and fixing his eyes upon Ellen Darnley, with a mingled look of grief and affection, which no words, and scarcely any painter, could express.

It was a little episode which broke for a moment through the painful solemnity of this sad occasion, and every one felt it to be a relief.

From a delicacy and consideration which did him honour, the judge passed sentence on Ellen Darnley first, that she might then leave the court, and be spared the doom upon the other convict, which, under the circumstances she was herself placed in, must have dreadfully wounded and shocked her.

In a low tone of deep feeling, at times almost inaudible from emotion, his lordship thus spoke :—

"Ellen Darnley, you have been proved guilty of having been accessory to the stealing and killing of a sheep, and, indeed, of having instigated others to the commission of the crime. It has come out, too, on the clearest testimony, that you received from men of infamous character a valuable ring, knowing it to have been stolen—whether or not as the price of your silence, as asserted, is a question which you alone can answer. The jury have recommended you to mercy, in very proper consideration of your youth at the time of the offence, and of your subsequently irreproachable character. To this recommendation I most willingly listen, and will not fail to report it to the proper authorities. In

the meantime, I have no discretion but to speak as the law directs me. The sentence I have to pass is"—and here his lordship's voice faltered, and almost failed him—"that you be transported beyond the seas for the term of seven years."

The words struck to poor Ellen's heart. The spirit which had hitherto so wonderfully sustained, died away within her, and she would have fallen senseless against the side of the dock, had not a gentleman who was near caught and supported her. Several ladies hastened to her assistance, and Mrs. Thompson having been summoned, she was borne away from the court, and conveyed to the room where my sister was sitting. I saw pity and concern in the sternest features, and heard sobs and sighs, the depth and compass of which told that they came from broad chests and sinewy frames. The sympathy of the other sex was expressed in a yet more distressing and affecting manner. For some minutes the business of the court was suspended. And few persons not officially detained were present when the passing of the sentence of death on Thomas Cooper, into whose case we have not entered here, concluded the tragedy of this memorable and melancholy occasion.

CHAPTER XX.

To describe my feelings as poor Ellen was borne away, pale and insensible, is impossible. My evidence had convicted her. Up to that moment there remained scarcely the shadow of a charge against her, certainly nothing to impeach in the slightest degree her honour or integrity. Everything had tended only to place her innocence, purity, and simplicity of

character in bold and beautiful relief to the gross scenes and vicious company, into a strange alliance with which the chances of her destiny had momentarily brought her. Even had she been pronounced guilty on other testimony than mine, my anguish would have been less. But that, after all she had done for me—saved my life, tended me in sickness—she should thus suffer, and I the cause, was a torture I could not endure. “She must not suffer, she shall not,” I said within myself; “she must, she shall be rescued from such a wretched and unmerited doom! But how? this is the question, and shall be the only question.”

The usual remedies having been applied, the poor sufferer was at length restored to animation.

“What a poor feeble-minded creature I have shown myself!” she said, in a faint voice; “why should I not be as happy in a foreign country as in this? Why should I be reluctant to leave a land where I have no home, no relative, no one who loves, no one who will miss me? Oh! yes, dear Mrs. Edwards!” suddenly checking herself.

The mournful tones of her voice went to the heart. My sister, affectionately taking her hand, addressed to her a few kind words; whilst Mrs. Thompson stood by, full of concern, gazing silently upon her. No one else was present. My father was gone in search of Mr. Waldy. I had not presumed to intrude.

“In fact, Miss Anneslie,” she resumed, after a short pause, “I am glad that a change is about to take place. Much kindness, and consideration, and benevolence I have indeed received, and I am grateful, very grateful, for it; but then it has been the result, not of love and affection, but of pity and compassion for my poor orphan condition, and now I shall no longer be a burden to any one.”

I was proceeding into the street, with no very settled purpose where I should go or what I should do next, when, just outside of the court-house door, a party of gentlemen and ladies, very fashionably dressed, were talking and laughing together. A handsome carriage, with four iron-greys, a coachman on the box, two footmen in splendid liveries, one standing by the leaders, the other with the door of the carriage in his hand,—altogether a most dashing equipage—stood waiting for some of the company which had just attracted my notice. One of the gentlemen, louder in his merriment than the rest, as well as broader in the shoulders, and taller by half a head, with sandy-reddish whiskers sufficiently bushy, and full round face with complexion to match, had so much of roguery and impudence in his look, and yet withal was so aristocratic in his bearing and appearance, that I could not help asking a stranger who was near me, if he knew who this object of my curiosity was?

“Oh! sir,” said he, “that is Lord C——. If you wait a few moments longer, you will probably see him mount the box and drive off some of the ladies and gentlemen he is talking to. He is not unacquainted with this vicinity. It was only about four years ago that he had an action brought against him here for crim. con., having seduced the young and beautiful wife of one of his neighbours. He had to pay ten thousand pounds damages, which was scarcely so much to him as ten pounds would have been to you, or at least to me, sir. The injured husband has since died of a broken heart, but that does not seem to weigh much on his lordship.”

“Dreadful!” I ejaculated, involuntarily.

“Yes, sir,” rejoined the stranger, “it is dreadful; but it does not appear that the world generally views the matter in the light that you and I do. I have heard that his

lordship is appointed to the office of steward of our races this year, and he is the leading man on the committee of the county balls."

I had heard enough, and, thanking my informant, we took a courteous leave of each other, apparently with that mutual feeling of goodwill which similarity of sentiment inspires. As I walked slowly away, I could not help mentally comparing the unequal operation of the law in the two cases. "Here," said I, "is a young, amiable girl, of otherwise unblemished reputation, to be transported for seven years across the seas, as if she were a very pollution to her own soil, for comparatively a very light offence, even if the worst were true. Here, again, is a wretch to be hanged for stealing a sheep. And there is the titled adulterer and the villanous seducer permitted to range at large, and to rove at will, a free citizen of the world, and welcomed back with open arms into society!"

I was lingering near the same spot, uncertain whether to return to the afflicted party from whom I had stolen away, or, what else I should do instead, when Mr. Waldy came up to me, saying, that he had obtained the indulgence to convey Ellen to the prison privately, and should feel obliged by my accompanying them. On reaching the carriage, I found Ellen already seated, my father standing by the door, and a constable mounted on the box. Mr. Waldy and I entered, and we drove off in silence.

We were not long in reaching the jail. The massive doors were opened, and a turnkey conducted us across the court-yard to a door opposite, at which the governor received us, and the constable was dismissed. Preceded by the former, and followed by the turnkey, we advanced along a passage until we arrived at an open door, where Mrs. Thompson was in

waiting to receive her prisoner. We accompanied the poor dear girl into her room, which was cheerless enough, having only one window of small dimensions, too high to be looked out from, and fenced by strong rusty bars. The walls were dark and dirty, and the stout oak door was thickly studded with large-headed nails. However, there was a bed with clean linen, though coarse, covered by a horserug; and moreover, a table, a small looking-glass, a decent washstand, with its furniture, and two chairs. In short, the governor had given as comfortable a room as he dared allot to a convict, and Mrs. Thompson had furnished it to the full as completely as the rules of the prison permitted. Both had acted from the benevolence of their disposition and the interest which the amiable and ill-fated girl had excited in them, and not from any promise, nor, I am persuaded, from any hope, of remuneration.

We should never have known how to tear ourselves away, but the governor intimated to us, after some little time, that it was expected we should retire.

— "In five minutes we will be ready," answered Mr. Waldy, and at the same time took out from his pocket a prayerbook and a bible. Opening the former, he threw himself upon his knees, as did Ellen and myself. Mrs. Thompson appeared to hesitate whether to remain or to retire, but on a motion from Mr. Waldy she also knelt down. The governor and his attendant, on observing what was about to take place, had left the room, and had respectfully closed the door.

Mr. Waldy then read, in a most impressive tone and manner, the concluding part of the commination service, beginning with the 51st Psalm. The pious sentiments, the outpourings of contrition and godly sorrow, clothed in such

solemn and appropriate language, went home to every heart, and we arose from our knees at the conclusion comforted and refreshed.

Nor, I believe, was the occasion altogether lost upon either the governor or his subordinate. Though they had not heard the words, the deep and fervid tones of the voice had reached them; and they must, at the least, have felt that prayer is a sacred thing. When they re-entered, there was in both a deferential look and manner of increased respect, and the governor very feelingly expressed his regret that the prisoner and her friends must be separated, assuring us that we should be at liberty to visit her again on the morrow, and on all occasions and at all hours which the rules of the place permitted.

Mr. Waldy then enclosed the bible and prayer-book in a small case, and presented them to Ellen, telling her that she would find in them a treasure of comfort and support under every trial and sorrow—a treasure which she might so make her own as that no power and no circumstances upon earth should be able to deprive her of it. He then extended his hand, as if to take a formal farewell; but his feelings overmastered even his strong mind and stoical demeanour, and catching her in his arms, he held her to his heart, in one long and affectionate embrace; then gently placing her upon the bed, he rushed out of the cell, and rapidly hurried away beyond the precincts of the jail.

This effusion of affectionate regard astonished Ellen as much as it did me, but we mutually expressed this only in our looks. I lingered a moment after Mr. Waldy's departure. A sad and a mute farewell, and I found myself almost unconsciously retracing the passage and the court-yard, along which, when I passed so lately, poor Ellen had my arm.

"Good night, sir," said the civil turnkey, as I was walking off beyond the outer gate, too anxious and thoughtful to have noticed him as I ought to have done; "Good night, sir."

"My good friend," said I, turning a few steps back, "make allowance for my feelings at this moment; I did not mean to be unkind."

"I know it, sir; I know it all; good night." Then, just stepping outside the door, and speaking in an under tone—"The young lady, sir, is in good hands and safe keeping, never fear for that."

I had not time to thank the honest, kind-hearted man ere the door closed, and I heard the sound of the ponderous lock behind me.

I felt I had much to be thankful for. Dear Ellen's accommodation surpassed what I had any right to have expected. She had, moreover, a considerate keeper in the governor, and a most warm-hearted friend in Mrs. Thompson, and I was satisfied would want for nothing, nor have any of her little wishes unattended to. But still her house was a prison, and her chamber a convict's cell.

CHAPTER XXI.

My father went into court again on the following day, soon after breakfast, and Jane set forth into the town to make some purchases. I had settled to go with the latter to see Ellen, at two o'clock in the afternoon, which I had understood from the governor to be the most convenient hour for admission into the prison.

I was sitting in deep thought, ruminating how I might set about my fixed purpose for Ellen, when I heard a rap at the street door, and presently the steps of some one following the servant up stairs. The latter brought me a card, saying, at the same time, "Mr. Western, sir, my mistress's father;" and immediately an elderly gentleman, of most pleasing manners and appearance, and exceedingly well dressed, came up to me, and taking me by the hand, said,

"I hope, Mr. Anneslie, that you find your quarters agreeable."

"Only too much so," I replied, "I fear we shall be reluctant to return to Beechwood. I shall always consider this act of kindness to a perfect stranger, as a singular proof of what generous minds are capable of."

"The frank and friendly manner in which you have met the wishes of Mr. Stanley and my daughter, Mr. Anneslie, is evidence of a kindred spirit. I did not like to intrude upon you before."

"Is that little hero, then, who so distinguished himself yesterday in court, your grandson, Mr. Western? He is the most gallant fellow, and the most beautiful boy I ever saw."

"And with a temper as gentle as his spirit is noble," replied Mr. Western. "His parents dote upon him, as you may well suppose, and are sometimes accused of spoiling him, but very unjustly, for he always does what they bid him. But perhaps you will say that you have only a grandpapa's word for that."

"I have called more particularly, Mr. Anneslie," he continued, "to ask if you will give us the pleasure of seeing you at dinner to-day, accompanied by your father and sister. Mrs. Western would have come with me, to call upon Miss Anneslie, but she was afraid it was too early an hour. I

know Mr. Howard would like very much to meet you ; so, if you can spare the time, I propose that we walk together presently to ask him to join our party. He always speaks in very grateful terms of his kind friends at Beechwood."

Having assured him how happy we should all be to dine with him, and to meet Mr. Howard, and that I should be very glad indeed to walk and call upon that kind friend,—Mr. Western, after a moment's pause, as if considering whether or not he should give utterance to what was passing in his mind, observed ;—

"I can scarcely look upon you as one unknown to me, Mr. Anneslie, although I have now for the first time the pleasure of being personally acquainted with you. I knew your mother before her marriage, and admired her greatly. She was very pretty, very amiable, of rather retiring manners, but very ladylike ; and sure I am that she was one of the excellent of the earth. I believe," he added, smiling, "I should have been a suitor for her hand, but she was at that time engaged to your father, to whom it was well known that she was attached with no ordinary affection. I see a resemblance to her in yourself, Mr. Anneslie, particularly in the eyes and the forehead, and it seems to carry me back to a period some five-and-twenty or thirty years ago. I assure you, I am quite happy in this meeting, and we must not consider each other as mere acquaintances of to-day, but as friends dating back to departed years and departed excellence. Pardon me," continued the kind, warm-hearted man, "but I know that it cannot be painful to you to hear what *she* was in early youth, who is now entered into her rest. I do not think I ever saw your father, and should be very glad to have the pleasure of an introduction to him. And I wish much to know your sister, and to make you all known to

Mrs. Western and to my youngest daughter, who, I am sorry to say, is the only one of my children now at home."

This unreserved cordiality from one who had known my beloved mother was quite affecting, and I found my eyes filling with tears as I held out my hand to him, unable at the moment to speak.

"One of my family is already acquainted with you, Mr. Anneslie," resumed Mr. Western, appearing not to notice my emotion; "you know Lord Clydesdale, I believe, and occasionally hunt with him?"

"I have had the honour to receive kindness from his lordship, Mr. Western, and have hunted with him once or twice."

Then you remember a famous run from Beechwood, a short time before Christmas?"

"A glorious run, sir."

"Well! My son-in-law, with a sporting friend, was occupying a cottage in the neighbourhood just then, for the purpose of hunting with Lord Clydesdale, and was out on that day. He wrote me afterwards an account of the run in a very humorous and graphic style, enumerating some of the particular incidents which occurred—how one gentleman was thrown out by the breaking of his stirrup leather—and a worthy baronet killed his horse—and my Lord—got a severe fall, and would never have set eyes on his runaway steed again, had not a courageous little boy, mounted on a pony, caught it, and brought it back to him—and how the pace was so killing that an idle spectator, perched on one of the barrows so numerous in the vicinity, might have seen a string of horsemen *tailing off* at the least three miles in length—and how Lord Clydesdale himself got into some difficulty down in the vale—and how a young fellow whom they had never seen before, named Herbert Anneslie, had decidedly the best of

the day, and was honoured at the close of it, in the presence of the diminished field, by receiving the brush from the master of the pack. Having a party in the evening, at which some sportsmen were present, the run was mentioned, and the letter called for. Accordingly I read it aloud. And one of my guests said, 'that must be a son of Mr. Anneslie of Beechwood.' And a second asked, if the latter had not married a Miss ——? 'I am afraid he was a sad loser by the failure of Messrs. ——, the great bankers,' observed a third. And a particular friend of mine, the proprietor of one of our provincial journals, remarked, 'I believe there never was a more honourable or generous man; I have reason to bear this testimony, for he once rendered me essential service in a pecuniary difficulty, through the medium of a common friend, and on terms much more to my interest than his own. I heard of his own loss with great concern, and with the sincerest wish that I had possessed the power of assisting him. Where is he now? I think Mr. Cranstoun has purchased the property of Beechwood.' 'Does he not live in a small cottage, about half a mile out of the village?' said another. 'I think I was told so one day, as we were passing by it to draw a small covert near.' And an old sportsman exclaimed, 'I am very sorry for the son; a young fellow who loves fox-hunting deserves a better fate.'

"And it was only a few days after this, Mr. Anneslie, that my son-in-law wrote me word again of the unhappy circumstances which had taken place near Elton Hill. 'I am grieved to tell you,' he said, 'that Mr. Herbert Anneslie is dangerously wounded. From what I hear, he received the grossest and most unprovoked insult. And whoever, or whatever, his antagonist may have been, you will be astonished to hear that the second was that infamous rascal,

whom every man of honour has long since scouted and shrunk from, Jeffreys.'

"From that moment, Mr. Anneslie, we seemed to know you, and you cannot imagine what general interest your sad sufferings excited far beyond our own circle of friends and acquaintance. And when we learned that this new and painful case must necessarily bring you here, Mr. Stanley immediately said, 'Mr. Anneslie must find that he is no stranger among us. I have a mind to take Mrs. Stanley and my children to the sea; and Mr. Anneslie and his family shall occupy our house. I do not think he will be offended by the offer from a brother sportsman.'

"I must beg you, my dear young friend, to bear with an old man and his garrulity, which will at least have sufficed to show you what old friends you and I are, and that you have established an indisputable claim to the sincerest interest and regard among all my family, and throughout a much more extensive circle."

"How wonderfully things are ordered, Mr. Western," I replied; "who would have imagined that so sorrowful an occasion as that on which we are come should have introduced us to such kind friends, whom, but for it, we should never have known?"

"And now, if you please," said Mr. Western, "we will walk, and call upon Mr. Howard."

That gentleman was from home, but Mr. Western wrote a few words on his card, and I looked forward to the pleasure of meeting him in the evening.

At the appointed hour, Jane and I paid our promised visit to Ellen, taking with us divers little presents which we thought would be acceptable to her. But the circumstance most so was the presence of Mrs. Edwards, who had come

over to Exeter to see her beloved child, and having learned where we were, had called upon us, and now accompanied us to the prison. The meeting was very affecting, but Mrs. Edwards was a sensible woman, who had seen much of the world, and tasted much of its sorrows, and Ellen's characteristic strength of mind bore her up.

We passed a very agreeable evening, Mrs. Western and her daughter receiving us with the utmost kindness, and Mr. Howard and a small party of select friends being there to meet us. The conversation turned chiefly on the events of yesterday, and on the beauty, the grace, the modest demeanour, the simplicity of manner, and yet the self-possession and manifest energy and decision of character of the ill-fated Ellen. Arthur Stanley was present after dinner, sitting between his grandfather and Jane, and again for some time in the drawing-room, where we became special friends. He was a wonderful child, but a child still, with nothing forward or pedantic about him, but only full of all that was amiable and intelligent. We were each pointed out to him as Ellen's particular friends, and found this at once a ready passport to his affections. I trembled for such a child—what might be his future destiny! or, how soon it might be determined! He was to have accompanied his parents to the seaside, but earnestly entreated to remain behind to see the judges, and was accordingly left in the care of Mr. and Mrs. Western.

I learned from Mr. Howard that he was much pleased with his present position, and from others that he was rapidly rising into eminence, and into a due appreciation of his high professional abilities.

Miss Western sang and played a little, and with much taste and sweetness; but whatever diverted the thoughts or

conversation for the passing moment, they invariably returned more or less directly to Ellen Darnley, and her unparalleled case. Even Wellington in the Peninsula, and Collingwood on the main, seemed just then to be forgotten. I availed myself of so favourable an opportunity to mention the efforts I had resolved to make in behalf of Ellen, and asked Mr. Western's advice how to proceed. It then became the general subject of the most animated discussion, and I was assured that all Exeter would rise up *en masse* to second my endeavours. Every one, however, finally acquiesced in Mr. Western's opinion.

"There is no direct appeal in the case, Mr. Anneslie," said he, "and the only plan I can suggest is to make use of any interest you or your friends may possess with the secretary of state, whose interposition might perhaps obtain a pardon from the crown."

"Lord Clydesdale would, I am sure, do anything to assist in such a cause," I observed.

"You could not have a better friend," exclaimed Mr. Western immediately; "if he can be prevailed on to exert his influence, the thing is done; for I know him to be a favourite at court, and, I believe, in much personal esteem with the Prince Regent."

Accordingly, I resolved to repair to Lord Clydesdale early on the following day.

CHAPTER XXII.

"Is Lord Clydesdale within and disengaged?" I asked of the waiter at the hotel, the next morning, soon after nine o'clock.

"He is just sitting down to breakfast, sir."

"Be so good to give him this card."

On taking up the paper, the first thing I cast my eyes on was a mention, in a leading article, of the case in which we were all so painfully interested. I glanced hastily over it, and was glad to see that the public feeling was warmly enlisted in favour of Ellen. But ere I had time to read the remarks, the waiter returned, and requested me to follow him up stairs.

"You have not breakfasted, Mr. Annealie?" said his lordship, kindly. "Waiter, place another chair at the table, and bring up some more muffins and eggs, and let a leg of that cold turkey be broiled."

"That was a very affecting trial, on Monday, Mr. Annealie. The poor girl is very beautiful, altogether a most bewitching creature. I have my full share in the universal interest and admiration she has excited."

"It is on her account, my lord, that I am come to plead."

"Appeals from the judges of the crown do not lie to me," replied his lordship, smiling.

"Nor is there any appeal," I replied; "at least, so I am given to understand, excepting to the crown through the secretary of state, and I believe your lordship has interest at court."

"The Prince Regent has honoured me with some attention, certainly, but I do not know whether this would justify me, in the opinion of his royal highness, in pleading for the reversal of a sentence passed by one of the crown judges on a gipsy girl."

"This is no ordinary case, my lord, and one which, as you justly observe, has excited in the utmost degree the sympathy of the public; and your lordship's influence in her behalf

could not but meet with general approbation and thankfulness."

"Indeed, Mr. Anneslie, I am greatly interested in this poor girl's fate, and seven years' transportation would be a most cruel punishment for her. I am going back to Atherstone to-morrow, and thence to London on the following day. You shall accompany me, and we will call on the secretary of state, and see what can be done. I shall start at four o'clock in the afternoon, so be here at that time, and bring your carpet bag with you."

Breakfast being ended, I took my leave, and walked out of the hotel much happier than I had entered it.

"We have waited breakfast for you half an hour," exclaimed my sister; "but you are such a runaway now, Herbert, that we never know where to look for you."

I then related my interview with Lord Clydesdale, and my intended visit to London.

"You have lost no time in carrying your benevolent intentions into effect," observed my father; "you are going on a truly Christian mission, and with Lord Clydesdale's interest I am really sanguine of your success."

"And how earnestly I shall pray for it," said Jane.

"I have seen Mr. Waldy this morning," said my father, "and you will not be surprised to hear that I found him more than usually depressed in spirits. I knew that he would feel poor Ellen's troubles very keenly, but he did not allude to the subject, nor, of course, did I. I hardly know how to advise you, as to mentioning to him the object of your visit to London; it might be only exciting hopes to end at last in disappointment."

"I think I had better say nothing to him on the subject," I replied, "and therefore, perhaps, had better not see him."

We then agreed to go together after luncheon to call upon the Westerns, to take our leave, and invite them to Beechwood, and to communicate Lord Clydesdale's promised aid in Ellen's behalf.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon, and I was sauntering about the streets, when on turning a corner I saw Mr. Waldy only a few steps before me. Happening at that moment to look round, he caught sight of me, and waited till I came up to him.

There was a genuine kindness depicted in his countenance, such as I had not seen there for a long time past, and I shall never forget the heartfelt earnestness with which he pressed my hand, and said, "A blessing upon you, Herbert!" He could say no more, but gently drawing my arm within his own, he led me away. We proceeded some distance, until we had reached the suburbs of the city, he in deep thought, and neither of us speaking. Nor did we stop here, but in the same moody silence passed on to the head of a narrow lane leading to a church, down which we turned. We entered the burial ground. The sun was just setting, and shining full on the western window. The tombstones cast their lengthened shadows in parallel lines, until they could be no longer distinguished, being obscured in the more extensive and dense shade of the lofty trees which were behind them. Not a branch of those trees moved; and there was a stillness in the air in perfect harmony with the lifeless bodies sleeping below, and seeming emblematic of soothing and cheering hopes amid the melancholy monuments of mortality. All was so quiet and so calm—I had never before seen a spot so sombre under so pleasing an aspect. I gave the rein to fancy, and was lost in many musings. I thought of cares and anxieties and tumultuous passions here laid at rest. I

thought of evils to come, and that they never come here. I thought of what it must be to have been set free from all these, and to be sleeping in sure and certain hope, and to awaken to a blessed immortality. I looked at the beautiful edifice before me, with its spire pointing to the skies, and I thought with the patriarch of old, "surely this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." I almost longed to be numbered with the departed. But just at that moment, as if to warn me that the bright illusions of the imagination play but on the surface, and that dreamy hopes are not substantial realities, the last ray of the setting sun sank below the horizon. It acted upon me as if by enchantment—all my sweet visions faded away, and darkness and sadness succeeded together.

"Herbert," said Mr. Waldy, breaking silence for the first time, "Herbert, what secrets lie buried here! what sins which have escaped human judgment—to be brought to the light, and to receive their reward, on a day which is near at hand!"

We were slowly advancing up a neat gravel path leading to the south transept, when Mr. Waldy abruptly turned to the left, and, still holding my arm, walked round the western angle of the church to the north side until he came opposite the chancel. There, by one solitary grave, he stopped, and holding his arms over his breast, remained with his eyes fixed steadfastly upon it. A neat head and footstone marked the spot, but there was no inscription. After some minutes, he turned to me, and said, "Herbert, do you believe in the agency of spirits?" I thought it a strange question, and was taken so entirely by surprise, that I answered at once, "No."

"What!" he exclaimed, "are we not for ever surrounded

by good and evil spirits? and sometimes," he added, in a voice of suppressed emotion, "the dead are permitted to take bodily shape, and to re-appear. Herbert, I am neither of weak nerves nor of superstitious temperament, but as surely as I am now looking upon you, the spirit of her who lies in that grave came to my bedside last night, in her own proper form, as though she had never died."

He then buried his face in his hands, and knelt down by the grave, and I could see, by the nervous and convulsive pressure of his fingers, that he was engaged in fervent prayer. After some considerable time he arose, and appeared more calm.

"Herbert," he said, "let us go."

He again took my arm, and retracing our steps in silence, we left the dead to their solitude, to return ourselves to the bustling and busy world.

I was about to take my leave of Mr. Waldy at the door of his lodgings, but he asked me to come in with so much earnestness of manner, that I could not refuse.

When we had entered his sitting room, he said to me, with much solemnity, "Herbert, I am at times under the influence of some uncontrollable impulse, and appear not to be master of myself. But I am well assured that what you see and hear, you will never mention, and therefore I the less grieve that I have sometimes unwittingly made you—or at least, without any premeditated design—the involuntary witness of my actions, and the confidant of my secret thoughts. As it is, however, you have already seen and heard what cannot but have wounded your high and honourable feelings. It is better both for yourself and for me that you should know all. Give me your patient and friendly attention but for one hour more, and I will tell you that which no one upon earth is privy to."

Poor man ! I would gladly have been excused, but I had no other alternative than to listen and to sympathise.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"HERBERT, you at least will not be so senseless as to turn away from my narrative with disgust, or to listen to it with impatience, because I commence it by saying to you, that all the unhappiness of my life—all which has rendered me a burden to myself, and a sorrow to others—has arisen from not having the fear of God before my eyes, and consequently, not ruling myself by his laws. No mental endowments or acquirements, no principles of worldly honour and integrity have been able to supply the place of religious obligation and control. With a strict regard to the external decencies of life, I have been a man of most unholy living ; and, with repute and credit among men, it would have been good for others if I had never been born.

"My parents died whilst I was yet quite a child, leaving me, almost wholly unprovided for, to the care of an uncle, a mere man of pleasure, unqualified in every respect for the important charge which he had consented to undertake. He sent me, however, to Eton ; defrayed the expenses of my education ; clothed me well ; gave me plenty of pocket money ; and treated me with a full measure of indulgence during the holidays.

"Having good abilities, and being by no means deficient in application, I made considerable progress at school in the usual routine of classical studies ; and, somewhat before the customary age of entering the university, I successfully com-

peted for an open scholarship at one of the colleges in Oxford, where I eventually succeeded to a valuable fellowship. I applied myself with much ardour to the acquirement of knowledge of various kinds, became much attached to a college life, and was had in respect and esteem by a large circle of acquaintance. In one essential, however, I was altogether wanting; for, although by no means what the world considers a very immoral man, I had no fixed principles of religion, or, more honestly speaking, no religion at all. It was a point which in my childhood had been entirely overlooked, and which in my subsequent education had formed a very secondary consideration. My greatest friend in my undergraduate days was your father.

"I was walking one day by a lonely cottage on the border of a wood, a few miles from Oxford, when, being oppressed by the heat, and fatigued by rather a longer ramble than usual, I asked permission to enter and sit down. The inmates were a female, apparently about forty years of age, and a young girl of sixteen or seventeen, of great beauty, and extreme elegance of form. The intelligence of her countenance, the delicacy of her complexion, and the gracefulness of her movements, at once suggested the suspicion that these were her paternal inheritance. And in fact, I soon ascertained that the husband of the mother was not the father of the child. Her name was Ellen Anderson.

"I was so captivated by her charms, so enamoured of all I saw in her, that it was with difficulty I tore myself away; and it was not many days before I found myself at the cottage again. I was received as a suitor—my passion every day increased—I loved more intensely than a good man would have done—and I was loved in return. My

intentions were not deliberately dishonourable, but I had scarcely anything beyond my fellowship, and some vague expectations from my uncle, and I had no religious restraint to set limits to my desires. The mother, who had herself been unfaithful to her marriage vow, was not sufficiently watchful over the innocence of her child. The husband had been dead some years. Opportunities were imprudently afforded. But why do I not tell the guilty tale at once? Why seek to divide with another the sin and the shame which were all my own? Ellen Anderson was virtuous—and I ruined her.

“In the meantime, my frequent absences, and always in the same direction, gave rise to unpleasant surmises and rumours within the college. They were not long in reaching the ears of my uncle, together with the intelligence, anonymously conveyed, that I was about to form a very low and unbecoming connexion. A short and angry letter was the consequence, commanding me instantly to break off all intercourse with the girl to whom I was paying such frequent visits, adding, in perfectly unmistakeable terms, what would be the certain and immediate result of my disobedience. What was I to do? Publicly to marry would be irretrievable ruin—to conceal my marriage and to retain my fellowship, even could this be done, would be dishonest and dishonourable—to forsake the unhappy girl would be villany, and my love was far too ardent and sincere to admit the thought of it for a moment. Ellen Anderson had an aunt living in the suburbs of the city of Exeter, and thither the mother undertook to convey her. It was a bitter parting, and under the most ominous forebodings.”

It was some moments before Mr. Waldy was able to proceed.

"There was a resident in the college, the senior scholar and next in succession for a fellowship, who scanned my conduct very narrowly, and who, both in the common room and elsewhere, made the moral duties, decency, decorum, and discipline, necessary to be maintained, the frequent subject of conversation. It was pretty generally known at whom all this was pointed, and it rendered the utmost care and circumspection necessary. My situation was truly miserable. I was severed from her whom I so passionately loved—my conscience was ill at ease. I dreaded exposure every day, and could not endure the thought of public shame to her or myself—whilst the loss of my fellowship would have reduced us both to the most abject poverty. I felt that even my letters excited suspicion, and some circumstances which transpired determined me that all addressed to me from Exeter should be enclosed to the mother at her cottage, who, if I did not call there in the course of the day, was to forward them under cover to a tradesman at Oxford, on whom I could entirely rely, and who had promised to deliver anything so sent only into my own hands.

"Oh, what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practise to deceive!"

"On arriving one day at the cottage, I found a letter apprising me that the dreaded event had taken place—that two children had been born—that the mother was in the most precarious state—in the paroxysms of her fever continually calling for her William, looking for him around the room, wondering how he could leave her; and, in the intervals of returning reason, earnestly entreating I might be sent for, to come to her immediately. The writer added, that if I desired to see the mother of my children before

her death, I must not lose a moment, for that her life was despaired of.

"Nor did I lose a moment. Hastening to a small town about two miles off, I hired a chaise, and without stopping on the road excepting to change horses, I travelled with the utmost speed to Exeter. But it was too late—about six hours before my arrival Ellen Anderson had expired."

Mr. Waldy, whose voice throughout had frequently been almost choked by his emotions, was here so overpowered that he rose up and left the room, and it was more than a quarter of an hour before he returned, and resumed—

"The distracted state of my mind did not allow me to think. Happily the aunt, in whose house we were, was a woman of activity and intelligence, and undertook all the necessary arrangements for the funeral of the mother, and the immediate care of the children. All that I was capable of was the selection of a spot for the last resting place of her, whom I had caused to share in my sin and its sorrows, but with whom no other has ever shared the undivided affections of my heart. I chose the north side of the churchyard, opposite to the chancel, because there was no other grave near the place, and because, from the superstitious feeling attached to the locality, I had no fear that her remains would hereafter be disturbed to make room for another tenant. In a state of grief not to be described, I took the coach the next morning for London, not daring to remain for the funeral, and hoping, by reaching Oxford from thence, to silence any surmises and suspicions which my absence might have occasioned.

"Notwithstanding all my precautions, however, rumour was busy with her hundred tongues, and I was kept in perpetual alarm lest my secret should be discovered. It was

judged expedient to remove the children to some distant and remote spot, which should have no possible link to connect it either with Oxford or Exeter. All was necessarily intrusted to the management of the aunt at the latter place, and the poor orphan children were conveyed into Yorkshire, and consigned to the care of a widow woman, in much respect among her neighbours, but in very penurious circumstances, in a retired village in the North Riding. Twenty pounds were paid her in advance, with a promise that she should receive half-yearly the same amount. And it afforded me inexpressible comfort to be assured that my children were in safe keeping and wanted for nothing.

"A college life now became distasteful to me, and I sought in busier scenes and more varied society some relief from the remorse and wretchedness which oppressed me. I lived much in London, where, at the several clubs to which I belonged or had access, I obtained introduction to statesmen, and orators, and the leading men of wit and learning of the day. This change in my mode of life gave much satisfaction to my uncle, at whose house I was a frequent and always a welcome guest, and who became as much attached to me as a man of pleasure ever is to any one, and invited me to accompany him abroad. We had already travelled through most of the principal countries on the continent, and were on the road from Rome to Naples, when my uncle was taken ill, and died; leaving me, by will, eight thousand pounds in the five per cents.

"The interest of this sum, added to the proceeds of my fellowship, afforded me ample means to indulge my inclination for travel, and it was my intention to visit all which was most worth seeing in the towns and cities where I had not already been. The unsettled state of things, however,

consequent on the French revolution, compelled me to come home sooner than I had designed, and in the spring of 1793, I took up my abode again in London, with a mind enlarged and enriched by an extended acquaintance with men and manners, the laws and customs of the various nations among whom I had been, the wonders of nature and the works of science and of art which I had surveyed, and the reflections which they had suggested. In one respect, however, I was still the same—my heart was unchanged, Herbert—I was still living without God in the world.

“I had always entertained a very parental affection for my poor motherless children, and, with the increase of my own fortune on the death of my uncle, had added considerably to the sum allowed for their maintenance, which I had always regularly remitted through the hands of the grandmother. Although I dared not avow my connexion with them, I had no sooner returned to England than I resolved to go immediately into the neighbourhood of their residence, and to contrive means to see them without making myself known. On my arrival at the village, I was under the greatest consternation to find that they were not there. From the poor woman to whose care they had been intrusted I learned, to my utmost grief and astonishment, that no remittance had been made to her since that which she had first received with them; that her own means were so small, that the children and herself had frequently been almost in a state of starvation; that the boy had died; and that the same person who had first brought the children to her, had again taken charge of the little girl. The woman asking if I knew the gentleman who had promised to provide for the children, and being answered, that I was a friend who had come to inquire after them for him, besought me to repre-

sent to him her desolate condition, which I promised to do, and requested to be conducted to the grave. Here I stood in secret agony of mind, which must have betrayed itself by its outward tokens to any other observer than the one beside me, too much absorbed in her own sufferings to be cognizant of another's.

"Having accompanied her back to her cottage, and given her something for her immediate necessities, and assured her that my friend would make good all which she ought to have received, I returned to the nearest town by the conveyance which had brought me to the village, and, taking nothing but a cup of tea, retired to my bedroom. Here I sat musing and mourning, full of remorse for the past, and without a wish or a hope for the future; reproaching myself as the murderer of the mother and her child; not knowing where to look for comfort, and not having faith to pray; until exhausted nature refused longer endurance, and laying my head on the bed by the side of which I was sitting, I fell into a feverish trance.

"In the disturbed and distracted state of my sleeping thoughts, it seemed to me that I was standing by the grave of my child, as I had been doing a few hours before, goaded by guilty recollections. Presently the sun set, and I suddenly found myself in a dark valley in a strange country, through which some irresistible power was hurrying me along, and where was nothing but graves, and tombs, and scattered bones, and shadowy and shapeless forms flitting about. In the far distance I for ever thought that I saw light, and even houses and churches, and the sun shining upon the roofs and the spires; but as fast as I approached them they all darkened into the same dismal and dreadful valley, whilst sounds of an unearthly character, and groans as of tortured spirits, added

new horrors to the scene. On emerging at last from this region of death, I saw before me the church and churchyard where I had marked out poor Ellen's grave. There was no mistaking them; they were too indelibly imprinted on my memory. At the entrance, as if ready to receive me, stood a figure, whose form I but too well knew, although the face was averted. She beckoned me to follow her, and conducting me to the north side of the burial-ground opposite to the chancel, pointed to an open grave. It had been newly dug—the fresh earth was heaped on the brink of it—and it was side by side to another, on which the rank grass waved. I felt the utmost repugnance to proceed—I would have stopped—but the same mysterious influence which had brought me there, impelled me on; and casting down an involuntary look, I saw a coffin, and read on a tablet, with awe not inferior to that of Belshazzar when he beheld the flaming hand writing his doom upon the wall—my own name, with the date of the present day, and the years that I had lived. At the same moment flames seemed to issue from the grave, spreading far and wide, and filling all the space around, fiercely pointing towards myself, but, as if restrained by some invisible power, not able to reach me. Other sights too there were, too fearful to be mentioned.

“Awaking in the utmost terror, the perspiration streaming from my hair, and every muscle quivering, I found myself in darkness. In the confusion of my mind I almost thought myself to be indeed in that horrible valley of which I had dreamed, and unconsciously looked around, as if expecting to see the hideous and ghastly apparitions which had so terrified me there. Fear by degrees gave way to joy and thankfulness; and throwing myself down on my knees, I poured forth the conflicting emotions of my soul in confessions of sin and sup-

plications for pardon, and prayed as I had never prayed before.

“The next morning I was unable to turn in my bed, and there I lay for many days; but before I left it, I hope I had begun to be an altered man. I was philosopher enough to know how waking thoughts give a form and complexion to dreams by night, but I had also grace enough to know that God’s merciful warnings are not confined to the day, that ‘when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed, then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and keep back his soul from the pit.’ I was as firmly persuaded that this dream, this phantasm, this concatenation of ideas (call it what you will), which so threaded through the mazes of my sin, so connected the present with the past, so pointed from the present to the future, so bound up together my guilt and its consequences, so warned me of what is the termination to an ungodly life—I was as firmly persuaded that the immediate hand of God was in this for the most merciful of purposes, as if an angel from heaven had told me so, and had been permitted to work a miracle in confirmation of his mission.

“My first care now was for my surviving child. Repairing to the cottage—the fatal cottage near the wood—I found the mother of Ellen Anderson married again. Her husband was a worthless man, who had appropriated to his own vicious propensities the remittances which had been made for the children, and had compelled her to write the accounts which I had continually received of their welfare. She was now unable to give me any information about my little girl, having never so much as heard of the death of the boy. Thence I proceeded to the aunt at Exeter, and from her I

had the unspeakable satisfaction to learn that my child was well taken care of by an honest couple in a lowly rank of life, whose daughter she was believed to be. With this intelligence I left the house, telling my friendly informant that I would call upon her again the next day, and in the meantime would consider with myself what was best to be done.

"The night had closed in, when, wrapping myself up in my cloak, I repaired to Ellen Anderson's grave, still standing apart from every other in its solitary sadness :—no unbefitting time or place to consider how I should act by her child, and whether I ought now to avow, or still to conceal, the circumstances of her birth and her connexion with myself. With my gloomy and ascetic disposition, was my home likely to be a happy one to her? Could I hope to gain her confidence and affections, or to fulfil the daily and hourly duties of a parent towards her? After long and anxious deliberation, I came to the conclusion to leave her where she was, persuaded that it would be far more to her future happiness to be the reputed daughter of humble but virtuous parents, than to know herself to be the illegitimate offspring of unwedded love in a higher rank of life.

"I communicated my resolution to the aunt—made her a handsome present—told her that I should remit through her, half-yearly, a certain sum for my child's support, which was to be given without its being known whence it came—and arranged with her that she should write to me from time to time, and in particular should give me immediate information if anything should occur affecting the welfare of Ellen.

"From that time I was made acquainted with everything respecting her, and all that I heard confirmed me in the prudence of my determination to leave her in the safe keeping of honest John Darnley and his wife, and to continue her,

after their decease, in the charge of the sister of the former, to whom she had been transferred. Of the death of the latter I had not heard, and so was wholly unprepared for the appearance of the little wanderer at Beechwood.

"Herbert, you know the rest; and I need not now inform you that the unhappy girl, whom we left on Monday within the walls of a prison, is no other than my own child.

"I have made you, Herbert, my unwilling confidant, with what definite object I do not know. When I discovered that you had been long acquainted with Ellen, I knew not what to think. I was full of apprehension and suspicion, and was guilty of the greatest injustice towards you. But you are a man of honour and principle; and I am satisfied that my child will ever find in you a friend and a brother."

Saying which he bade me good night. I pressed his hand in silence; I had no power to speak. I loitered here and there, after I had left him, and walked up one street and down another, endeavouring to arrange my thoughts and to recover my composure before venturing to present myself to my father and sister.

CHAPTER XXIV.

On the following day I accompanied Lord Clydesdale to Atherstone Park.

When I entered the drawing-room before dinner, no one was there. The evening was cold and chilly, and consequently the well-furnished apartment had even a more comfortable appearance than usual. The blazing wood fire,

with here and there a large piece of glowing coal, the rich Turkey carpet, the easy damask chairs, the splendidly figured hearth-rug, the delicately-coloured curtains falling in such graceful folds, all went as items to complete that air of luxurious enjoyment which so peculiarly belongs to the residence of an English gentleman of fortune. As I was all alone I walked up to the fire-place, and taking a coat-tail on either arm, indulged in my favourite position of standing with my back to the fire. When the outer man is on such good terms with himself, the inner man also is well pleased, and revels in joyous anticipations, or soars away into the upper regions, and dwells in an airy castle. I was just now in a most happy mood—pleased to have made such a friend as Lord Clydesdale—sanguine of his success for poor Ellen—full of the thoughts of seeing Fanny so soon—all was blue sky above, and sunshine around me. I kept looking all the while towards a door at which I expected my host and hostess to enter, that so, on the first intimation of their approach, I might assume a more becoming position. My attention being directed to that one part of the room, and my body partly turned the same way, a side-door had entirely escaped my observation, through which Miss De Vere glided in unperceived by me, and had actually seated herself by the fire before I became aware of her presence.

“It is very chilly this evening,” she observed.

I actually started at the silver tones of that sweet voice. The coat tails instantly dropped into their proper places, and as I turned, I saw a sparkle in her eye and a smile on her beautiful mouth, as if she enjoyed the confusion which her unexpected entrance had occasioned.

“I thought, Miss De Vere, that the reign of fairies, and their occasionally descending from their airy thrones to tam-

per with the excited feelings of mankind, were mere idle tales, having nowhere existence excepting in Arabian fiction and Christmas legends."

"And were not your conclusions correct?"

"Do not ask me, Miss De Vere, when my scepticism has just experienced such a practical refutation."

"But fairies, Mr. Anneslie, are light, flighty, and flimsy: I do not consider the compliment as in any degree atoning for your inattention to my presence."

"But fairies are always represented as diffusing pleasure and happiness wherever they deign to appear."

"The present instance alone excepted; for I am sure those were no disagreeable ruminations which my commonplace remark has so unluckily dissipated."

"I will not deny that my thoughts were rather of a pleasing cast; but I would, Miss De Vere, that you were at least so much of a fairy as to be able to divine how far less pleasurable than they are now."

"That, however, not being the case, suppose you were to embody some of these immaterial essences in words, Mr. Anneslie. If I might hazard a conjecture, they had some reference to your intended journey to London, and the object of it. Apropos, Mr. Anneslie, what a shame of you to give evidence against that poor girl—for my uncle says that it was your statement which made so against her."

"It is that, Miss De Vere, which so greatly distresses me; but alas! I had no alternative."

At that moment Lord and Lady Clydesdale entered the room. The latter received me in a very gracious manner, and the evening passed away most agreeably; the easy and unaffected kindness which I experienced setting me free at once from all reserve. His lordship was very chatty, and

amused us with various anecdotes, and with the answers of some of the witnesses on the recent trials; and as he always made a good story still better by his manner of telling it, he kept us laughing all dinner time—an exercise much recommended by the faculty.

After the ladies had retired, his lordship asked me some questions as to my prospects in life.

I told him that I was junior clerk in a government office, but that circumstances had occasioned me so greatly to overstay the leave of absence which had been granted me, that I was quite at the mercy and discretion of others as to the receiving me back.

“That is not a life to suit you,” was his lordship’s reply; “to be shut up all day at a desk, with nothing but a dim taper to light you, and not to know noon from midnight.”

“It is certainly not much to my taste, my lord,” I replied, “but my father’s circumstances render it necessary; I must provide for my own maintenance.”

“That is all as it should be, Mr. Anneslie; every young man should be of some profession, and labour in it, too. And they who work cheerfully and diligently, and loathe nothing so much as to be a burden on others and dependent themselves, deserve to be assisted.”

The last words were spoken half to himself, as if he were musing upon some thought which had crossed his mind; whatever it was, however, he did not express it.

When we entered the drawing room, Lady Clydesdale was reading. On her husband addressing some kind remark to her, she put aside her book, and smiled. They were greatly attached to each other. He thought that he could never do enough for her; and her sweet countenance always wore that cheerful expression which speaks contentment of

the heart and a mind at ease. And, indeed, thought I, if Lady Clydesdale be not happy, where shall we look for one that is so?

Miss De Vere was seated at the piano, whither of course I repaired to take my stand by the fair performer.

"You are acquainted with the Cranstouns, are you not?" were her first words; "and of course you have heard that Miss Cranstoun is about to be married."

As she said this, she continued to play—a great relief to me, as it prevented her observing the instant change of countenance, of which I was conscious. I recovered myself sufficiently to answer that I had not heard of it."

"Oh! yes, she is to be married to her cousin, Mr. Dastard."

An involuntary sigh escaped me, and I could not dispel or disguise the melancholy and sadness which came over me.

"You are not fond of music? I really beg your pardon for supposing you were so, and compelling your unwilling attention."

"I assure you, Miss De Vere, that although I am no judge of music, I am extremely fond of it."

"Are you a judge of drawings, Mr. Anneslie? for I see my uncle has fallen asleep, and my aunt seems very intent on her book, so, for the credit of the family, I must do my best to amuse you."

"Which, at least, Miss De Vere, you will not find to be very difficult."

"I do not know that, Mr. Anneslie," she replied, smiling. "This," she continued, taking a portrait from a portfolio, "is considered a good likeness of Miss Cranstoun, Mrs. Dastard that is to be; what is your opinion?"

I took the drawing with a trembling hand, and at the

first glance my looks brightened, a heavy weight was removed from my heart, I breathed freely, and in the delight of the moment, I unconsciously said, "This is *Miss* Cranstoun, not *Fanny* Cranstoun."

Miss De Vere smiled, as she replied, "I did not say *Fanny* Cranstoun, I said that *Miss* Cranstoun was about to be married. It has rather surprised people, because they had settled that Mr. Dastard should marry the younger sister. However, I think it a much better arrangement as it is; and, perhaps, Mr. Anneslie, you are of the same opinion?" she added, again smiling.

My spirits then rose in proportion as they had before been depressed, and the next hour passed speedily away in lively and agreeable conversation, in the course of which I learned that Lady Clydesdale and Miss De Vere were to divide the long journey; and, after viewing Stonehenge, were to stop for the night at Amesbury, in which parish that inscrutable monument of antiquity stands, and where the George Inn was in high repute as being a most comfortable sleeping house.*

I shall not weary my readers with my speculations that night, when I had reached my own room, and drawn an easy chair close to the fire. I shall only tell them that his lordship had ordered breakfast punctually at seven o'clock the next morning; that we started at nine; and that, although we travelled in a light carriage, with four horses, and with only the interruption of half-an-hour for dinner, it was considerably past the middle of the night when we arrived at the termination of our long and hasty journey.

Lord Clydesdale told me, at breakfast the next morning,

* And equally famed now for its *port wine*, as the editor can vouch.

that if he could get away in time from some important business which he had to transact, he would call upon the Secretary of State, and ascertain when we might wait upon him.

At the earliest hour that I thought I might venture to do so, I set out to call on the Cranstouns, in Berkeley-square. I must leave to the reader to imagine how my heart fluttered as I counted the numbers on the different doors, and how my knees scarcely served to support me as I approached slowly towards the one in which alone I had any interest. During the whole journey to London with Lord Clydesdale, the nappy thought of seeing Fanny had been uppermost in my mind; and now that I seemed almost in her presence, I wished myself a hundred miles from the spot.

"Are Mr. and Mrs. Cranstoun at home?" I inquired of the servant who answered my rap at the door.

"Mr. Cranstoun is out, sir; but my mistress is up stairs in the drawing-room. Mr. Herbert Anneslie, I believe."

I followed him up the spacious staircase, my head dizzy, and scarcely able to speak.

On entering, there were but two ladies seated at the further end of a long room—one on a sofa, working embroidery, the other writing; the former was Miss Cranstoun, the latter her mamma. Another chair appeared to have been just vacated, for it was partly turned, as if its occupant had risen in a hurry, and an open book was lying on the table, close by. They received me with affected cordiality but real coldness, and asked after my family and Beechwood, but made no allusion to my illness—doubtless satisfied at seeing me recovered. Every sound I heard made my heart beat more quickly, and my eyes turn instinctively in the direction of the door, expecting to see Fanny enter. But I

might have spared myself all this excitement and anxiety, for during the time that I remained, Fanny Cranstoun never made her appearance; and when at last I arose to take leave, no wish was expressed by either of the ladies of seeing me again. I hastened out of the room and the house. The old butler, as he opened the front door, with a smile of recognition, asked kindly after my father and sister, and how things were going on at Beechwood; and added, in a very respectful manner, that he was glad to see me so much better than he had expected. I was struck with the real interest in me which the honest man appeared to feel, and in my feverish state of mind it contrasted strongly with the cold and unexpected treatment which I had experienced above stairs.

I confess my pride had received a shock, as well as my anxious expectations a disappointment. It was evident that the Cranstouns were willing to know me at the retired village of Beechwood, but that in London a junior clerk of the Admiralty has no business at the West-end. How different from the conduct of Lord and Lady Clydesdale! But so it ever is. The really noble dare to be independent, whilst they who owe all their consequence to their wealth, and have been lifted by it to a giddy height, which it would have turned the heads of any one of their ancestors so much as to have looked up to, never seem to think themselves safe in their strange position, and live in an unceasing and nervous apprehension of losing caste.

Mr. Cranstoun's father had amassed great wealth by trade and fortunate speculations. At his decease, the son, who had received a good college education, inherited his large fortune, and although not immediately connected with any trade, was a man of considerable influence in the city. He

and his lady regularly attended court, and his daughters were about to be presented.

Perhaps it may be said, "To be sure, you could not be a welcome guest at Mr. Cranstoun's, when you presumed to aspire to the hand of his accomplished daughter; you had no right to expect any better reception than you met with." Well, benign reader, perhaps you are right; but I am as free to have my thoughts on the subject as you to have yours. I felt that by birth I was more than Mr. Cranstoun's equal. I was persuaded that no man would strive more to make his daughter happy than I should do; I knew that all that was wanting he could supply out of his abundance; and I felt that I had a right to win her affections, if openly and honestly I could do so. Had I believed him capable of sacrificing his child's happiness, because he loved Mammon more, certainly, for her dear sake, I would not have brought it to the risk.

I considered, too, that Mr. and Mrs. Cranstoun owed me something, in that I had received a most gross and unprovoked insult under their own roof, and in their own presence, and from their own relative; that the insolence of the offender had nearly cost me my life, and had involved me in long and severe sufferings; that the rude and unfeeling aggressor was still admitted on terms of intimacy by them; and I thought that the aggrieved had a claim to courtesy and kind consideration at the least, or, in default of it, owed them nothing in return.

At five o'clock in the evening, a travelling carriage and four drove up to Lord Clydesdale's, and I immediately hastened to the door to hand the ladies out. Lady Clydesdale welcomed me very kindly, and Miss De Vere gave me her hand as I offered to assist her in alighting. - She looked

very pretty in her travelling' cap and bonnet. Her cloak, fastened by a handsome brooch in front, hung gracefully from her shoulders; and I observed the prettiest little foot imaginable peep out from beneath her dress, and glide upon the pavement.

On entering the drawing-room before dinner, I found Miss De Vere standing near the fire-place, and reading a letter which seemed to engage all her attention. I stopped for an instant, and, turning my head, was about again to leave the room.

"Do not go, Mr. Anneslie," she said; "I have just finished this long stupid letter." Saying which, she tore it in pieces, and in rather a petulant manner threw it into the fire. She then turned to me, and smiled, for she perceived that this slight indication of temper had not escaped me.

"I am sure, Mr. Anneslie, you do not expect young ladies to preserve a perfect equanimity of temper under all circumstances."

"I certainly do not, Miss De Vere."

"Do you not think it would show a great want of feeling?"

"All tempers with any feeling at all must at times be a little ruffled, but some are greater adepts than others in concealing it," I replied.

"But then, Mr. Anneslie, the pent-up fire blazes forth presently with the greater vehemence; whereas a little harmless excitement is but a spark, which the next moment is extinguished."

"Leaving a fresh rosy colour behind," I said, laughing.

"Are you fond of dancing?" she resumed, bending down her eyes at my last words; "because," she continued, without waiting for my answer, "my aunt found, on our arrival, an invitation to a ball to-morrow evening at Lady

Butler's, and she has asked permission for you to accompany us."

"I feel Lady Clydesdale's kindness very sensibly," I replied, "and should much like to go."

After dinner Lord Clydesdale told me that he had seen the secretary of state, adding—

"I am sorry to say, Annealie, that he did not give me any great hope of success. He said that numerous applications of similar import had been lately rejected; and that, unless strongly recommended by the presiding judge, or in a case of life and death, they were never submitted to his Royal Highness. That a report of the case in question had not yet reached him; but that if I would call again in a day or two, he should be able to give me a more definite answer. So we must, in the meantime, wait patiently and hopefully."

This greatly distressed me, and, for the time, I forgot everything else in affliction for poor Ellen. My sanguine hopes of success faded away, and all the sorrows which awaited her crowded upon my thoughts. I was too sensible, however, of Lord Clydesdale's kind and generous interposition not to make an effort to conceal my disappointment. Probably I was not altogether successful in this, for he presently added:

"Depend on it, Annealie, whatever interest or influence I may possess, they shall be exerted to the utmost in behalf of the poor girl."

My hopes partially revived.

CHAPTER XXV.

WHEN we arrived at Lady Butler's, the number of carriages returning, and of others thronging the entrance, made us aware that the greater part of the guests had already arrived, whilst the sound of music within told us that the dancing had commenced. Miss De Vere had promised to be my partner in the first quadrille, and it was certainly not without a little feeling of pride that I entered with her into the gay circle of fashion and beauty.

The first quadrille was just finished, and we took part in the usual promenade which ensues at the termination of each dance. My eye eagerly glanced around to discover whether Fanny Cranstoun made one of the company, for at the upper end of the spacious apartment, I saw Mrs. Cranstoun seated on a sofa, by the side of another lady, who was splendidly dressed and sparkling with diamonds.

The jewelled lady was the mistress of the mansion, to whom Caroline De Vere introduced me. Mrs. Cranstoun looked surprised at seeing me, and not the less so, I imagined, at my promenading with the Honourable Miss De Vere. Lady Butler detaining us to ask a question of my fair partner, Mrs. Cranstoun took the opportunity of inquiring where I resided in London. What motive prompted the inquiry, I cannot say.

"He is my uncle's guest at present," said Miss De Vere, "and I hope that you will hold out no inducement to tempt him away."

"Oh! none whatever, I assure you," was the reply; "he must be far too happy where he is to desire to change his quarters."

"Or his society," added Miss De Vere, in an under tone, and with an arch look, as we moved on.

Whilst walking through the crowded room, many came up to solicit the hand of Miss De Vere for the next quadrille, but all received the same answer, that she was engaged. I observed them staring at me, as much as to say, "In the name of Fortune, whom have we here?" For all are extremely tenacious of the privileges and exclusiveness of the select circle.

Presently we saw approaching a young man of strikingly elegant appearance, being no other than Henry Cranstoun.

"Herbert Anneslie," he exclaimed, shaking me heartily by the hand, "I am very glad to see you. I heard yesterday of your having called upon us, and was exceedingly vexed that neither my mother nor sister could tell me where to find you. I have much to say and to ask, but will now only add that I am rejoiced to see you looking so well."

Then turning to Miss De Vere, he asked if he might have the pleasure of dancing with her the next quadrille.

"I am engaged, Mr. Cranstoun."

"The one after?"

"I shall be most happy."

After the quadrille was over, in which I had stood in the way of so many noble lords and wealthy commoners, who successively sought the privilege I then enjoyed, and I had committed Caroline De Vere to the care of Henry Cranstoun, I seemed alone in the gay and crowded assembly. Of the young and beautiful who passed me every moment I knew not one. My eye had failed to discover either Fanny Cranstoun or her sister, and I said to myself, "I have no business here; why did I come?" and I determined to retire.

The absence of Fanny, besides its disappointment, caused me very serious apprehensions. I knew she had been very ill, and although later accounts had mentioned her recovery, I did not know how far these had been authentic. In the solitude in which I now found myself, having none to converse with but my own thoughts among the hundreds which surrounded me, I was disposed to draw the most melancholy conclusions. As my musings passed from one subject to another, I could not help thinking it strange that no allusion whatever had been made by Mrs. Cranstoun or her daughter to the trial in which I had been so recently engaged. I could easily understand that nothing had been said of my illness, out of consideration for Mr. Dastard, but I could not account so satisfactorily for the other. A circumstance, however, almost at this moment occurred, which perhaps might help in some measure to explain it. I was passing from the ball-room into an adjoining apartment, and was just within the latter, and behind the half-opened door, when one of two young men, whom I had seen standing close to it on the other side, said, concluding of course that I was out of hearing.

"That's the fellow that was dancing with Miss De Vere just now; I wonder how he comes to be so noticed by Lord Clydesdale. I asked who he was, and some one told me that his name is Herbert Annealie, the same who was mixed up somehow in that trial for sheep-stealing at Exeter, which has made such a talk; and that he is to marry a gipsy girl who is under sentence for transportation, if they can but get her a pardon on the plea of youth. A pretty fellow to be introduced here!"

"You had better take care what you say of him, though," replied the other, "for he's a man that stands up to be shot

at, without firing at you in return, and that's not a pleasant sort of duel to be engaged in. That empty, ill-tempered coxcomb, Dastard, whom we used to hate so at Christ Church, picked a quarrel with him, shot him through the body, and nearly killed him; I wish it had been the other way! However, he shoots up into the air, and so you had better say nothing more about him. And besides, they say he is not afraid to ride, and I dare say that is the reason why Lord Clydesdale patronizes him. And he and Miss De Vere appeared to be upon very good terms with each other, so that he may not be a bad fellow, after all."

Hearing my name mentioned, I certainly stopped a few moments, from curiosity; but, remembering the old adage, that "listeners hear no good of themselves," I did not wish to run the hazard of any further remarks, and walked on. From what had been said, however, I came to the conclusion that my share in the transactions which had been brought to light at Exeter was not much to my credit with the fashionable world, and, therefore, not with Mr. and Mrs. Cranstoun.

I was sauntering on to reach some room, as far distant as possible from the dancers, when, on entering one, I saw, to my surprise, Fanny Cranstoun seated on a couch, and an officer in a splendid uniform standing by her side. Although not far from the door, her face and person were turned in a direction which prevented her seeing me. A party of old dowagers were playing at long whist in one corner, and Lord Clydesdale and Mr. Cranstoun were engaged in apparently earnest conversation by the fireplace.

"Are you not engaged for this quadrille, my lord?" were Fanny's words, as I entered.

The officer then walked away in search of his partner, and

as Fanny's eyes followed his retiring figure, they lighted upon me. The colour rose to her cheeks as she gave me a very kind look of recognition. I hastened to her side, we shook hands, and our mutual confusion increased.

"Do you not dance, Miss Cranstoun?" I asked, recovering myself sufficiently to break the embarrassing silence.

"Not this evening, Mr. Anneslie; I have not been very well, and this is the first party I have been at since we returned to town. I wished not to have come now, but mamma was so anxious I should, that I consented, on the condition that I might be permitted to sit still. But come, Mr. Anneslie, sit down here," motioning me to the vacant part of the sofa by her side; "I have a thousand questions to ask you about dear Beechwood."

She was beautifully dressed, and, I thought, looked prettier than ever, but there was rather the hectic colour of sickness and debility than the bloom of health. As I seated myself by her, how different were my feelings from what they had been but a minute before! Then I felt sad and lonely in the midst of a brilliant crowd; now there seemed to be but one in the world, and I was supremely happy.

"And does Beechwood, then, really possess so much of interest in Miss Cranstoun's remembrance and regard?"

"Certainly, Mr. Anneslie; some of the happiest days of my life were passed there; and, alas! some of the most unhappy. Oh! Mr. Anneslie, I do not like to allude to that dreadful affair. I never could have believed him capable of such baseness and wickedness. Oh! how I have suffered in your sufferings! And then for him to have made me the miserable and most unwilful cause! I, too, have been his victim, Mr. Anneslie: And to think, too, that I am to be for ever meeting him, and that I am to call him brother! Oh!

what a life is this, where a perpetual round of pleasure and gaiety turns the brain, blunts the feelings, and corrupts the heart! There is nothing real here, and I long for freedom, for friendship, and for Beechwood. Mr. Annealie, you must pardon me; I did not think to have said a word of all this."

She spoke with the rapidity and energy of generous and excited feelings, not to be controlled. I listened with inexpressible pleasure and admiration. At the same time there was something so simple in her manner, something so unconsciously dignified and impressive in what she said, something which made you so certain that it came from a heart knowing neither art nor disguise, that it effectually repressed in me any feeling of vanity, as if I were the secret source from which this emotion and these sentiments flowed.

"And now tell me," she continued, "how is your father, and Jane, and that poor little boy?—and tell me about that good strange man, Mr. Waldy, and all you can think about Beechwood, for we shall soon be interrupted, and then I shall hear nothing more for months, unless your sister is so kind as to write to me. But before anything else, tell me what you are doing in London, and where you are staying; and what is to become of that poor girl, who seems to have been so hardly dealt with in the trial at Exeter, and whose beauty appears to have captivated the very reporters of the press?"

I then hastily told her a few of the circumstances respecting Ellen, and what was my object in coming to London; adding that I was at present staying with Lord and Lady Clydesdale.

"How long do you think you shall remain in town, Mr. Anneslie?"

"Only until Lord Clydesdale shall have succeeded in obtaining a pardon for poor Ellen, which I hope will be in two or three days, at the furthest. I am quite alone in the gay and fashionable world, and have no inducement to remain in London; and, indeed, I am come up for one particular purpose, and feel that I have no right to trespass on the kindness of my noble host and hostess after that object shall have been attained."

As I was speaking, Mrs. Cranstoun approached, leaning on the arm of Lord George—the officer I had before seen talking to Fanny. She looked little pleased at finding us in a tête-a-tête conversation.

"Mr. Anneslie," she said, "let me introduce you to a partner."

I well knew her motive in this pretended kindness, and rose reluctantly; she took my arm, whilst Lord George seated himself on the sofa by Fanny. On reaching the ball-room, Mrs. Cranstoun exclaimed, "I am really sorry, but the young lady, to whom I was intending to introduce you, is just standing up to dance." Saying which, she coolly took a seat, probably enjoying the mortification which I certainly felt, and which I had not dissimulation enough to conceal. I bowed to her my acknowledgments, and was on the point of taking my revenge, by quietly walking back into the card room—where I should have had the gratification of seeing Fanny sitting near the whist table, watching the old dowagers at their play, and Lord George intent on a family portrait hanging over the mantel-piece—when Caroline De Vere, who had seen what was passing, came up, and in a very kind and fascinating manner begged to introduce me to a partner. I offered my arm, and we walked across the room. The lady was disengaged, and we stood

up to dance. Caroline engaged herself as our vis-a-vis, and my angry feelings were soon lost in the agreeable conversation of my partner, the elegant movements of Miss De Vere, and the exhilarating sounds of the music. Lady Clydesdale herself offered to be my partner for the next quadrille, and afterwards introduced me to a very delightful girl, one of the prettiest in the room. I might have been in every dance during the remainder of the evening; and I am not sure that, ere the close of it, I was not beginning to be looked upon as some great unknown.

CHAPTER XXVI.

I WAS not very early myself on the morning following Lady Butler's ball, but on descending to the breakfast-room I found no one there. Caroline De Vere, entering a few minutes afterwards, said that Lady Clydesdale would breakfast in her own room, and that she believed her uncle was gone to the office of the secretary of state. I could not have heard anything which would have given me half the pleasure. Amid all my little round of dissipation, Ellen had never been forgotten, nor could I have felt a moment's gratification in anything, had I not known that she was in the hands of kind friends and protectors; that she would experience every comfort and consideration which her unhappy circumstances would admit of; and that I was myself engaged in her service.

So my fair companion and I sat down to breakfast, our conversation naturally turning on the events of the evening before, though with due caution, on account of the servants, who were continually passing in and out.

By the way, I have often remarked with surprise how little reserve there commonly is, at the dinner-table especially, in reference to these members of the establishment. One would imagine them to have neither eyes, nor ears, nor tongues, instead of all these being sharpened by curiosity, as well as by the eager expectancy which is awaiting them below stairs. I am persuaded that in a great man's house there is a regular system of obtaining and retailing what is said, as complete as that of the reporters in a parliamentary debate. Each carefully sets down in his unfuddled recollection the point to which his own information had arrived when he was called away from his post, and by comparing notes with his successor (as the latter does again with the fellow who had superseded him) is able to make his portion of the story good at both ends; and the whole being carefully collated and arranged, by mutual conference and correction at the second table, with such embellishments and amplifications as the discursive imagination of the reciter may suggest, is all ready for exportation the next day to the domestics of the several families living in the neighbourhood of the several guests, whose servants had been so laudably and diligently employed in qualifying themselves to give a wider range and a longer life to the witty sayings, candid and charitable remarks, and edifying conversation, which otherwise might have evaporated with the fumes of the dinner. The tale loses nothing in the telling, when the light-tongued lady's-maid insinuates it into the ear of her young mistress, and her young mistress retails it to her mamma, and her mamma gravely reports it to her lord and master. And friends and families meet again, and look shy upon one another. And every time they meet, the estrangement is widened. And matches are broken off, and

lovers are separated, and long friendships are rent asunder. And all this, and much more, is the consequence of allowing servants to be listeners.

Having presently adjourned to the drawing-room, Miss De Vere amused herself by drawing, and, handing me her album, requested me to write something in it. "It must be original," she added, "and nothing about love."

"Something as cold as charity, then?"

"Yes."

Now, never having been at a public school, of course I knew very little about verse-making, and so will spare my readers my effusions on this occasion.

In the course of the morning visitors were announced, and Miss Cranstoun and Fanny entered the room. My heart beat high.

"We have been with my brother to the Panorama," replied Miss Cranstoun, to a question from Caroline De Vere, "and have called on our way back only to ask after you and Lady Clydesdale, for mamma would be angry were we to pay visits unaccompanied by herself."

"Not, I am sure," replied Caroline, "at a house where, I trust, there is too much of mutual regard for formality."

"Mamma's ideas upon etiquette are so very singular," answered Miss Cranstoun, "that it is impossible to feel assured whether what we may be doing is right or wrong." Not very dutiful, thought I, Fanny would not have spoken so. "However," continued Miss Cranstoun, "Fanny must bear all the blame, for it was her suggestion that we should call and ask how you were, after the fatigues of last night."

"What a beautiful flower!" exclaimed Fanny, as she arose, and walked across the room.

Miss De Vere left her chair to follow her, when the door

opening at the same moment, all regards were directed that way.

"My dear Fanny," said Lady Clydesdale, walking up to her, and shaking her cordially by the hand, "I am very glad to see you with such a nice blooming colour; I do hope now to find you recovering health and strength every day. Miss Cranstoun," she continued, turning to the elder sister, "you are both come just in time for a little scheme I have to propose. But first, are you engaged at Lady Milton's ball to-morrow night?"

"We have not the honour of her ladyship's acquaintance," replied Miss Cranstoun.

"Well then, I am so far glad of it," rejoined Lady Clydesdale, "that I hope we shall induce you to give us the pleasure of your company to-morrow. We want to escape another night of dissipation quite so soon after that from which I am half dead this morning. These late hours do not suit either Lord Clydesdale or myself; and I do not think that Caroline or Mr. Anneslie will feel much disappointed in the loss of Lady Milton's crowded rooms. Mr. Cranstoun was wishing, the other day, to see our villa near Henley; and I think you would all be pleased with the place, for, though not very extensive in its grounds, it is really very pretty. And the conservatory, though much smaller than the one we have in Devonshire, will show to greater advantage now than it would do two months hence, when all nature will be in her beauty and her glory, and put gardens and gardeners to the blush. We are going very early indeed to-morrow morning, as Lord Clydesdale has appointed his steward to meet him on business. We propose to dine at about three o'clock, and to return to town in the evening. So, if you think that you and your party would like to join us in this little excursion,

(only that we will not hurry you off quite so early in the morning as we shall be obliged to go,) I will write a little note to your mamma, which perhaps, Fanny, you will be so good as to be the bearer of."

Miss Cranstoun and Fanny both appeared much pleased; so the note was written, and they took their leave.

I offered Fanny my arm, which she accepted; and as we descended the staircase, I said, "I hope, Miss Cranstoun, you will use your influence with your mamma to accept this invitation."

"Indeed I will, Mr. Anneslie, for I should greatly like to go," she replied, in a very sweet and artless manner.

"I dare say we shall see something very beautiful," I observed, "though perhaps not so sublime and magnificent as the view from Elton Hill."

"No, Mr. Anneslie; but that was near Beechwood."

We were now at the carriage door. I pressed her hand affectionately, and the pressure was returned. The steps were folded, the door closed, and the carriage drove away. I followed it with my eye; and even after it was out of sight, I stood unconsciously musing at the foot of the flight of steps, until I accidentally caught sight of the footman holding the hall door in his hand, waiting for me to re-enter.

"I am glad to find you within, Anneslie," said Lord Clydesdale, on entering the drawing-room, a few minutes after I had returned to it; "for we are to be at the office of the secretary of state at four o'clock this afternoon."

We were punctual to the appointment, and were instantly ushered into the presence of a person, whose grave and business-like countenance forcibly struck me with the importance of the heaps of official documents which were lying before him.

I had previously been desired by Lord Clydesdale to tell as briefly as possible the object of my visit, as five minutes was a long time for the secretary of state to devote to one individual.

"My lord, and Mr. Anneslie," was the immediate reply, "I am grieved to tell you that the case is one which I could not possibly be justified in submitting to His Royal Highness. Many capital convictions for a similar offence have already arrived at the office, and to interpose in reference to so comparatively lenient a sentence as only seven years' transportation, is impossible."

Lord Clydesdale bowed and thanked him, and we instantly retired.

"And is there no hope, then, my lord?" I exclaimed, when we had re-entered the carriage; and all the sufferings and degradation which were in prospect for poor Ellen rushed into my mind, and almost overpowered me.

His lordship was silent and thoughtful for a few moments, and then said,

"I do not like to give up anything which I have once undertaken, particularly in so interesting a case as the present, in which my own feelings, I assure you, are warmly engaged. I have a hope still, but you must not ask me about it now. You shall hear all in good time; and in the meanwhile, trust to my zeal no less than to my discretion."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE next morning, after an early cup of coffee, we started for Elmsgrove, where Lord Clydesdale had a considerable

estate, and a very pretty villa, although small, compared with his noble mansions in Piccadilly and at Atherstone. It was very tastily laid out, with extensive gardens, and a conservatory filled with the choicest plants and flowers from all the known quarters of the globe. It was situate about a mile from the Thames, with a fine view of that celebrated river; and in front of the house, at the distance of two or three hundred yards, was an artificial piece of water, partially concealed by laurels and evergreens planted on its banks. To the right, with a romantic dell between, was a hill of considerable height, with a few rooms yet remaining of a baronial residence once frowning on the summit of it, now the inglorious abode of the gamekeeper and his family, whose dogs and a shaggy pony were the only occupants of the grass-grown and ruined courts. Two long avenues of elms on either side of the house might yet be traced, from which, no doubt, was derived the name which the estate still bore. Here Lord and Lady Clydesdale were in the habit of passing the Easter recess, and several weeks of the summer, either when weary of a London life, or when the fashionable world had left the metropolis, on the prorogation of the two houses of parliament.

It was a beautiful morning when we started, and although in the month of February, might have been mistaken for an April day, if only the trees and the hedges had put on more of their clothing. We all took our places inside, and I confess that to roll along in an easy carriage with four horses, although ridden by postillions, was quite as pleasurable as to be mounted on the box of a stage coach, with only the protection of a great coat against wind and storm, or altogether without protection against clouds of dust, and the scorching rays of the sun.

Whilst changing horses at Hounslow, I asked the landlord of the inn, who came to the carriage hat in hand, what might be the number of coaches passing through the town in the course of the four-and-twenty hours, to which he answered about a hundred and forty-five. Lord Clydesdale smiled at the question, and the ladies marvelled at the answer.

At Slough we took up a nephew of Lord Clydesdale, then a boy at Eton, for whom he had obtained a holiday—a fine-looking lad of about fourteen, but, as I judged him to be at the first glance, a thorough Pickle. He jumped upon the barouche-box, and I should not have been surprised to have seen him dislodge one of the post-boys and take his place on the saddle; but fortunately he stood in some awe of his uncle, whose first words, after shaking hands with him, were, “Now, George, none of your pranks, remember, or I shall report you at head quarters, and never ask to have you again.” However, he looked a good-tempered fellow, and Lady Clydesdale and Miss De Vere both spoke in his favour, and said that he was only a little wild, and a great favourite at school, excepting with the masters.

“Rather an ominous and unfortunate exception, my dears,” observed Lord Clydesdale. “It takes a long time, and frequently costs a life or two, to break in these wild colts.”

It was not long, alas! before practical proof was given us of the wisdom of this remark, which I have seen verified since in innumerable instances, and never without thinking of Lord Clydesdale.

On our arrival at Elmsgrove, we found a most welcome and substantial breakfast awaiting us, to which we all did ample justice, especially the young Etonian and myself. We had

made such good speed since leaving Piccadilly, that it was yet but little past eleven o'clock, and Lord Clydesdale proposed to me to walk to the top of the hill with one of his tenants, who would point out to me all the most interesting features of the landscape, and tell me to whom the different places in the neighbourhood belonged. I accordingly accompanied Mr. Forster, who discharged the office assigned him in a very intelligent and agreeable manner.

"Do you see a woody recess to the left, Mr. Anneslie, down in the vale yonder, as far off as the bend of the hill we are standing on enables you to see?"

I had been observing it before. There was such a quiet and calm appearance about it, that it was quite striking. No house was visible. Compared with the different seats around, the size and magnificence of which told that they belonged to the great or the affluent, it looked so modest and retired. It was just the place one longed to be at. The Thames, or one of its tributary streams, seemed to flow around it, and the imagination pictured something so sweet and so secluded within, as to be the fit residence of some simple and pious hermit, owing his daily food to nature's spontaneous products, and his drink to the crystal spring.

"It was there, sir," said my companion, "that, about forty years ago, the 'Hell-Fire Club' used to assemble, and perform their infernal orgies."

I shall never forget the words, or the shock which they gave me. At this moment they seem to be sounding in my ears, and my eyes still to be gazing on the spot, so supremely beautiful as God had made it, so polluted by the wanton and senseless impieties of men, ingenious in devices how to provoke his wrath and to set him at defiance. Some of the highest rank and the most splendid talents were there.

Counsellors of state were not wanting. The cabinet sent its deputy. And, if annals tell true, one was among them who held counsellors and cabinets in awe.

I heard something of this from Mr. Forster, and have read more about it since. But it is an awful and hateful subject, so let it pass; only I can never recall this eventful day to my mind, much less write an account of it, without thinking of that beautifully sequestered scene, as it appeared to be from the eminence on which I was standing, its waving woods and its glittering waters, and the profligates who used to assemble there. I was young then, and it made a deep impression upon me; I am not young now, but the impression has in no degree passed away.

My thoughts, however, soon reverted to the anticipated pleasure of meeting Fanny Cranstoun, and I began to be a little impatient of any further delay, lest she should have arrived during my absence. I proposed, therefore, to Mr. Forster that we should return to the house. I was not without my fears that, after all, the Cranstouns might not come, and, perhaps, for the very reason that I was of the party; but I was relieved from all apprehensions on this point, by seeing a carriage with the well-known livery driving up to the door, as I was looking out anxiously from the hall window, and I hastened forward to hand them out. Mr. and Mrs. Cranstoun assumed a friendly manner; Miss Cranstoun, like a dutiful daughter, took her cue from papa and mamma; Fanny was, as she ever was, all kindness and artlessness, but I could perceive a degree of anxiety and tremulousness in her look and manner.

On entering the drawing-room, we found Mr. Daubeny, the rector of the parish, with his wife and daughter, very sensible and agreeable persons. As dinner was ordered

punctually at three o'clock, Lord Clydesdale recommended that Mr. Cranstoun should at once set out on a rather more extended walk with him, to see the alterations which he was making in some farm buildings; Lady Clydesdale undertaking to do the honours of the conservatory and gardens to the rest of the company. All was very beautiful, and, although I did not presume to gather a flower to present to her, I found more than one opportunity of showing attentions to Fanny, which seemed to be in no way lost upon her.

The dinner was exquisitely dressed, the wines excellent, the champagne exhilarating, the conversation lively, the spirits high, good humour prevailed. I was seated where most I could have desired to be, with Fanny on my right, and the amiable Mrs. Daubeny on the left; the two ladies seeming mutually pleased with each other. Our remarks naturally turned first on the beauties of Elmsgrove and the surrounding country, interspersed with contrasting, but not disparaging, observations between Fanny and myself on the grander scenery of Devonshire, and then with descriptions of some of the most striking views of it to Mrs. Daubeny, who had never travelled so far to the west. From thence we changed to the light but elegant literature of the day, particularly to Scott's poems—"The Lay of the Last Minstrel"—"Marmion"—and "The Lady of the Lake"—in her admiration of which Mrs. Daubeny yielded nothing in romantic enthusiasm to Fanny or myself. I shall never cease to remember that dinner as the happiest I ever sat down to, but like all other scenes of innocent delight and enjoyment, it came too quickly to a close. After sitting a short time at the dessert, Lady Clydesdale proposed to the ladies to withdraw, saying that she should order tea and coffee early, and

would send to let us know when it was ready. It was now very little past four o'clock, the weather still maintaining the unusual character of a warm spring day in the month of February; it was the 22nd.

When the ladies had left the room, I found myself sitting by Mr. Daubeney, and we immediately entered into conversation on different topics. At last I ventured to ask him something about the place and the club, which had so attracted my notice and excited my horror when standing on Elmsgrove Hill. He was just telling me some particulars painfully interesting, when on a sudden we heard a confused noise in the hall, and, as we thought, a distant scream, and the dining-room door being burst suddenly open, Mrs. Daubeney rushed in, vainly tried to speak, and sunk down upon the floor. Every one started up, Mr. Daubeney to his poor wife, the rest to rush out of the room. I was the nearest to the door, and the first out at it, and running across the hall, I saw Miss Cranstoun wringing her hands, and as I passed her, she exclaimed:

"The water, the water! Fanny, Fanny! Oh, Mr. Anneslie, save Fanny."

On reaching the hall door I saw too plainly what had happened. On the brink of the water in front was a lady in dripping garments, whom that young urchin from Eton seemed to have just landed. Beyond, at a considerable distance, was a boat turned upside down, and what appeared to be a female figure struggling by it. As frenzy is said to give strength, so I am sure despair gave me speed. It could have been but a few moments ere I was on the bank. I threw off my coat, plunged into the water, waded up to the chin. I was but a poor swimmer, once or twice, indeed, I had essayed in sport with my clothes on, now, life was the

stake. I was yet some yards from the drowning girl. I struck out and reached her at the moment that she was sinking. I caught her by her long flowing hair, so as to keep her head above water. I struck out again with my left hand, supporting her with my right. It was not many yards, or nothing but an immediate miracle could have saved us. I felt for and touched the ground with my feet. Having reached a less depth, I took up my precious burden in my arms. I mounted the bank, which was now lined with spectators. They would have relieved me, but I motioned them off. Quietly, and with what speed I might, I conveyed her to the drawing-room, and laid her on the sofa. Her eyes were closed, her hands cold as death—life seemed to have fled.

I fortunately remembered some directions, which I had long since heard my father repeat (who, I believe, had always thought I should be drowned), as to what should and what should not be done to a sufferer in such circumstances; and having impressed them upon Lady Clydesdale, who, amid the deepest grief yet retained composure and presence of mind, I left, of necessity, poor dear Fanny to the care of those of her own sex. The village doctor had been sent for on the first alarm, but fearing that either he might not be forthcoming, or not be competent to the occasion, I told Lord Clydesdale that I should mount one of the post horses, and gallop off myself to Maidenhead, the nearest town, for further assistance, saying that I was sure I should go quicker than a servant would.

"Well, Herbert," replied his lordship, "you are a spirited fellow, and may be the means twice this day of saving the life of that dear beautiful girl. I would I had a fleetier animal to lend you, but I have not a horse here of any description."

I flew to the stables—not a soul was there. I snatched up a brass-rimmed saddle and hooded bridle, and clapping them on the back and head of the one I thought the most likely to go—buckling on, moreover, one of the postboy's long-necked spurs, and arming myself with his whip to boot. I dragged the unwilling beast into the yard, sprang upon him, and reached Maidenhead in less time, I engage to say, than he had ever traversed the like distance before. Stopping for a moment at the inn, I ordered a chaise and four horses to be ready instantly, to go to Lord Clydesdale's, and was conducted meanwhile by the obsequious landlord himself to the house of a surgeon, who he assured me was of the highest repute of any in the town or the neighbourhood. He was happily at home. I told him the case. Giving his medicine chest into my hands, and insisting on my swallowing a glass of brandy, he hastily put on his great coat, and snatched up his hat and gloves. We found the chaise awaiting us at the inn door, and the postillions mounted. We took our seats in a moment—the door was closed—the wheels were in rapid motion, when I shouted out from the window to take good care of the horse I had left, and within three-quarters of an hour from the time I had left Lord Clydesdale's, eight miles, and all delays and impediments had been surmounted, and I was there again, and the doctor with me.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LORD CLYDESDALE met us at the door as we alighted, and I saw in an instant, from his look and manner, that he had nothing cheering to communicate.

"I am sorry I have only to tell you," said his lordship, "that the poor girl is in bed between hot blankets, and that everything is being done for her which the village doctor can suggest, and I dare say it is all very right; but I will immediately conduct this gentleman to her room. In the meantime, take off your wet clothes, Herbert, and put on some which my servant has ready for you."

Grief and consternation were now the only inmates of an abode where, not two hours ago, all had been mirth and enjoyment. The agony of my own mind I shall not attempt to describe. I was useless now. I wanted to be again in action. Hitherto I had been too much engaged to enter into all the horrors of this dreadful catastrophe; now they rushed upon me in full force. I could not endure to remain in the house. I felt as if I could not breathe. I hastened into the outer air. I wanted to be quite alone, and went into a retired path. I walked with the utmost speed, and then I ran, as if it would give me some escape from my thoughts, and some relief to my anguish. Then I stopped, and looked up at the windows, to see if I could discover where Fanny was. I could not collect my thoughts sufficiently to pray, excepting in broken sentences and ejaculations for mercy. Violent agitation of the mind, or piercing paroxysms of pain, are no times for prayer. With every passing moment my excitement increased. I felt as if I could have received the most fatal intelligence with calmness, but suspense was intolerable. I hastened back towards the house, to learn the worst. The very resolution seemed to give me relief. I thought I had nerved myself up to a sullen endurance, and that I could calmly ask, and calmly receive the answer. I had arrived within a hundred yards, when I suddenly stopped. I became rooted to the spot. I felt as if

I could not move another step, and as if my legs would no longer support me. I heard footsteps, and saw a servant approaching. Lord Clydesdale wished to see me immediately, in the breakfast-room. Seeing that I tottered and looked faint, the servant offered me his arm, which I accepted, and in this way walked on a few steps. But feeling ashamed of my weakness, I roused myself, and desiring my attendant to say to his lordship that I would be with him directly, I followed with a firm step. As I crossed the threshold, I felt as if entering the chamber of death.

"I wished to be the first to tell you," said his lordship, with great kindness, "that they have succeeded in restoring animation to that dear girl, whom you so happily saved to-day. There is now, I hope, no doubt of her recovery, though of course it will be a work of time, for she was not in very good health before this melancholy accident. However, we will be very thankful for the favourable report which has just been made to me, and confidently anticipate the best. Caroline has got only the fright and the wetting, which will be a wholesome lesson to her for the future."

I grasped his lordship's hand in gratitude and silence.

"And now, Herbert," he added, "as we were not altogether prepared to accommodate so large a party at a moment's notice, Mr. and Mrs. Daubeney have kindly offered you a bed, but you need be in no hurry to repair to it. Coffee will be brought in presently; and in the meantime Mr. Cranstoun is in the drawing-room, and wishes to see you."

To the drawing-room I accordingly went, where Mr. Cranstoun received me, in these first moments of joy and gratitude, as the preserver of his daughter. He desired me to excuse his want of words to express his sense of the debt which he and his family owed me. Mrs. Cranstoun would

have come down stairs for the very purpose of seeing and thanking me, but that she was quite unequal to it after the shock she had experienced, and hoped I would excuse her. They should all have the pleasure of meeting me the next morning, and they could never forget their obligations to me.

I could hardly master my impatience in being thanked in this formal manner for having saved the life of one for whom I would willingly have given my own twenty times over. One silent look of kindness would have been worth it all. With all his words, and grateful as no doubt he was, I saw that his heart was not with me. He thanked me as he would have done a stranger whom he had never seen before in his life, and I felt all the while that he would rather a stranger had done it. After all, I had done only what a Newfoundland dog would have done, and I could hardly refrain from making this reply. But I endeavoured to conceal what I felt, and answered shortly, but respectfully,—

“Sir, to have saved Miss Fanny Cranstoun’s life shall henceforth be the happiness of my own.”

I then wished him good evening, saying that I was to sleep at the Rectory that night, and that my thanksgivings would be offered up for God’s mercy towards us all, and my prayers for his daughter’s perfect restoration.

Having taken leave of Lord Clydesdale for the night, I repaired to the parsonage, whither Mrs. Daubeney, who had remained with Fanny as long as she could be of any service, had just preceded me with the happy intelligence that her life was safe.

I now learned that the occurrence which had been the cause of so much terror, suffering, and sorrow, was owing to the senseless and mischievous folly of that young Etonian,

whom we had brought with us. Mrs. Daubeney told me that on leaving the dining-room, most of the ladies had put on their bonnets to enjoy the beauty of the afternoon, and walk about the gardens and shrubbery. That Caroline De Vere and Fanny Cranstoun had gone down to the water with George Winstanley, to look at a boat which they saw there. That the latter had entreated the two girls to get into it with him, assuring them that the water was very shallow, in proof of which he put the oar to the bottom. As soon as they had imprudently entered, he unfastened the frail vessel from its moorings, pushing it out from the bank, and then standing at one end, began see-sawing, throwing his weight alternately from side to side. It was nothing but an Indian canoe, made of the bark of a tree, which a navy captain had presented to Lord Clydesdale. The result was inevitable. In the course of a minute it was turned upside down. Miss De Vere and George Winstanley being at that end of the canoe fell into the shallower water nearer the bank, whilst Fanny Cranstoun was thrown considerably farther out. Mrs. Daubeney and Miss Cranstoun had seen the accident from a walk near the house. With the rest the reader is acquainted; excepting that I ought to add, that the young scamp, as soon as he could recover himself sufficiently, laid hold of Miss De Vere by the arm, and brought her to land.

The next morning, before it was well light, I was at Lord Clydesdale's, to inquire how Fanny was, but no one was stirring. I augured well from the circumstance, and sauntered about the walks which I had traversed in such agony the evening before. At length I observed shutter after shutter removed from the windows, and returning to the house, was informed that Miss Fanny Cranstoun had passed a restless and feverish night, but that the medical attendants, who had

remained until five o'clock that morning, had reported that she was going on as favourably as could be expected.

I had been a considerable time in the library, endeavouring to while away the tedious interval with a book until some one should appear of whom I might make more particular inquiry for Fanny, when Mr. Cranstoun entered, and coming up to me, shook me by the hand. Then, saying that he should return in a few minutes, he hastily went out, and presently brought in with him Mrs. Cranstoun and his eldest daughter. The former came running up to me, and taking my hand in both of hers, exclaimed,—

"Oh! Mr. Anneslie, we all feel so much obliged to you, you can't think. And Fanny is going on so nicely. And I hope you haven't caught cold. I have got such a prescription for a cough; you must let me send it to you. You are to take a teaspoonful of the mixture in a little cold water three times a day. And I am so glad the water wasn't deep. Poor Fanny! I think it must have been the fright and the cold water that had such an effect upon her, for Miss De Vere and Mr. Winstanley walked out so easily and quickly."

"Yes," observed Mr. Cranstoun, "I am glad that Mr. Anneslie, in the exercise of his kindness, did not risk his own life; we never could have forgiven ourselves the thought of such a thing."

"However," rejoined Mrs. Cranstoun, "I shall certainly tell Lord George that you were the first to wade into the water after Fanny, and I am sure he will thank you very much. And he has got great interest, and perhaps will be able to do something for you, if you will only tell him what you want, and let him know where you are to be found."

I felt the blood mount to my cheeks for a moment, but anger

and every other feeling instantly subsided into one of ineffable contempt, not however unmingled with real concern and compassion for the unparalleled meanness of those whom I had so lately looked upon with esteem and regard. Merely bowing, I awaited what she had further to say, and then turned the same inquiring look to Mr. Cranstoun; and as both remained silent, I walked up to Miss Cranstoun, shook her by her hand, and made an affectionate inquiry after her sister. To my surprise she was too much affected to speak, and I saw the tears running down, as, turning hastily round, she left the room.

I then resumed my chair and my book. I did not think that either Mr. Cranstoun or his lady felt quite comfortable or at their ease. They first looked at some pictures; and then walked to the window; and then wondered if breakfast was ready, and proposed to go to see; and then off they went.

As soon as they were gone, I went too; and as I was crossing the hall I met Miss Cranstoun, with an untied bonnet on, and a shawl loosely thrown over her shoulders.

"I wish to speak with you, Mr. Anneslie," she said, as she led the way to the front door, which was standing open. I followed her. Descending the steps, she turned into a walk close by, with shrubs on either side, and taking my hand, said, with an agitated voice,—“Oh! Mr. Anneslie, you have saved Fanny's life; at the risk of your own, you have saved dear Fanny's precious life, and how can we ever repay you? She knows that it was you who brought her out of the water, and she *shall* know that you ventured your own life to do so. I was to tell you, Mr. Anneslie, that she will ever pray for you, and that she desires nothing so much as your happiness. And oh! Mr. Anneslie, I do now so grieve for your sufferings, and

that I have not grieved for them before as I ought to have done. But indeed I have always been very, very sorry. And then that *he* should have done it! Oh! it is a dreadful thought. I believe it will some day turn my poor brain. But you have returned good for evil, Mr. Anneslie, and how poor must we all feel in comparison! And you shall ever have my prayers, Mr. Anneslie, as well as Fanny's." And the affectionate girl burst into tears.

I took her arm within mine; and pressing her hand, spoke some kind words of comfort to her, and begged her not to distress herself on my account, for I was quite well. And I requested her to say to her sister how deeply I felt the kind message she had sent me, and to assure her that if I had been so happy as to render her any service, it was what I would have encountered a hundred deaths to have done.

We had now almost reached the house, and a servant came to say that Lord and Lady Clydesdale were in the breakfast-room.

"I have the pleasure of assuring you, Mr. Anneslie," said Lady Clydesdale, "that Fanny is better this morning than I could have believed possible when I left her last night."

"You are a gallant swimmer, Herbert," exclaimed his lordship; "and it is well you are so, or you would both have been lost. A little on this side of the place where the boat was upset, the depth suddenly increases, as if there had been a gravel or a chalk pit, which probably was the case, for this is only an artificial piece of water. But we will say no more about it, for I do not like to think what a house of mourning this would now have been.

"Pardon my allusion to the danger your lovely daughter

was in," he continued, turning gracefully to Mrs. Cranstoun, "since she has so happily escaped."

At this moment Miss De Vere entered the room, and, coming up to me, with much mock formality, made me a low curtsy, saying,

"I am greatly indebted to you for your kind consideration of me last evening, Mr. Anneslie; why, you shot past me as if you had never seen me before in your life. I think you might have just stopped a minute or so, and hoped I was not wet, or hoped I was not cold, or some such small amount of civility."

"I crave forgiveness, Miss De Vere, but I observed Mr. Winstanley in close attendance, and did not like to interrupt the tête-à-tête. I hope, however, that you are no sufferer this morning."

"From the tête-à-tête?"

"From any cause or circumstance, more particularly a cold bath so early in the season."

"Oh! all the better, I assure you; they put me into such a nice warm bed, and gave me such a delicious glass of something hot and sweet. I have not been made so much of, Mr. Anneslie, for many a day."

"May I be permitted to ask, Miss De Vere, where the young gentleman is this morning, who was so happy as to render you such important services yesterday? I do not think I have set my eyes upon him since."

"Nor do I think you are ever likely to do so again, where I am, Anneslie," said Lord Clydesdale. "I just gave him a change of clothes, and hired a dog-cart, and sent him back to Eton last night, where I hope they are giving him his desert this morning."

"But how came you to be so unwise, Miss De Vere, as to

trust yourself in a boat with such a boy?" observed Mrs. Cranstoun. "I should never have thought of doing so."

"Why, my dear madam, I can plead only the wonted excuse, that you must not expect an old head on young shoulders," replied the lively girl.

"Well! I must say it was a piece of great good fortune that Mr. Anneslie is such a swimmer; it is not every one, I suppose, that has the art of swimming with his clothes on," continued Mrs. Cranstoun.

I saw a look of astonishment on Lady Clydesdale's countenance, and of displeasure, mingled with something else, on his lordship's. But Miss De Vere drily answered,

"I suppose it is not every one that has Mr. Annealie's art of doing many useful and agreeable things, besides saving the lives of his friends. But you have had the happiness of a longer acquaintance with him than mine has yet been, Mrs. Cranstoun."

Mr. Cranstoun kept looking out of the window, that never-failing resource of people in difficulties; and, being anxious to change the subject, and to save Mrs. Cranstoun from exposing herself further by a display of her ungraciousness, to say the least of it, and feeling still more for her amiable daughter, who could with difficulty restrain her tears, I walked up to a vacant chair by Miss De Vere, and begging permission to sit by her, expressed a very sincere hope that she was really no sufferer this morning from the little adventure of the evening before.

"None whatever, Mr. Anneslie, I assure you; I am quite well, and just at this moment rather warm."

It had been arranged that Mrs. and Miss Cranstoun should remain there until Fanny was well enough to be removed, and that the rest of the party should return to town soon after

breakfast—Miss Cranstoun promising a daily bulletin to Lady Clydesdale, to report how the lovely sufferer was going on.

CHAPTER XXIX.

I LEFT, of course, without seeing Fanny, and my thoughts during our journey back from Elmsgrove were of a very complicated and conflicting character. I had been the means of saving Fanny's life, and Fanny was out of all manner of danger: this was happiness unalloyed. But then other thoughts and circumstances and feelings succeeded. How was it all to terminate?—was a question too personal and too importunate to be refused a hearing. The happiness of my life was bound up in it. Of Fanny's gratitude and most friendly regard I was quite secure; but this, alas! was not the boon that I coveted, or which would in any degree satisfy the longings of my heart. Yet what reason had she ever given me to hope that I had her first affections? This Lord George, whoever he might be, was evidently the desired son-in-law of Mr. and Mrs. Cranstoun,—the selected and avowed object of their own choice at least. He was of high rank, and I had reason to suppose of large fortune too, and he was young and handsome, and I had seen him with Fanny. And what had I to balance all this? One thing was quite clear—that I should never receive the daughter's hand with her parents' consent, were I even to possess her heart. Their utter repugnance to the connexion had manifestly engendered such a personal and positive enmity towards me, that, even under the circumstances which had occurred—being no less than my having

rescued their child from otherwise certain death—and under the first emotions of joy and thankfulness for her preservation, they were unable to repress or disguise it. As regarded their sanction, therefore, my case was altogether hopeless.

Such were my anxious ruminations, although I did not allow them to cloud my countenance, or to render me a gloomy companion to the kind and generous friends with whom I was travelling.

On our arrival in Piccadilly, I found a letter from Jane, enclosing one she had received from Ellen. I subjoin the latter, judging from the interest with which it was read, not only by myself, but by my noble host and hostess and their amiable niece, that it will not be unacceptable to my readers.

“MY DEAR KIND GENEROUS FRIEND,

“I KNOW that you will be writing to me, and I think that you will be wishing to hear from me, and I am desirous that my letter should be the first, as the only token in my power to give you of my grateful and affectionate regard.

“I hope that you, dear Miss Anneslie, and your good father, are well and happy in your pretty cottage at Beechwood, and that you have all many sweet springs, and summers, and autumns before you to enjoy its peaceful, and quiet, and lovely walks. I am more familiarly acquainted with them all than you would perhaps imagine; and although I never had a companion with me there, they are very fondly cherished in my recollections. When I first knew them I was scarcely fifteen—a child, and childish in my ways and amusements. I had just come away from low associates and from a mode of life which was hateful to me,

and I felt as if I had been brought into a new and delightful state of existence. I used to rise with the sun, and desired no greater happiness than to roam at large and at will, and to gather the wild flowers where I listed.

“And I have known those pretty walks, too, later than this.

“Miss Anneslie, I am to be a traveller, and to see other climes; and I hope I shall always be permitted to look upon the scenes around me, for I do not think they will send me down into a mine, though perhaps they may shut me up in a room with high windows out of reach, like the one I am in now; but if they do let me look upon the works of nature, I shall see, I dare say, very beautiful scenes, but I shall never see anything like the peaceful and lovely walks of Beechwood and its neighbourhood, or like the sublimity of Elton Hill. And I do not think that I shall have any galling chains upon my wrists, for I have always met with kind hearts, and I do not doubt for a moment that there are some in that far land, or that I shall find them there; but I know that none can chain my thoughts, or have control over my recollections, and they will traverse mountains and seas, and mock at time and at space, and their dwelling will be at Beechwood, where I shall seem to be.

“And how can I but acknowledge the hand and the mercy of God, in delaying this period of my exile five years beyond the date of the robbery; and in so caring for me in the meantime, and placing me in such safe keeping, and making me to know Himself, away from whom, alas! I had been too much living before? Not, dear Miss Anneslie, that I have anything heavier to lay to my charge than what I have just said—but is not that enough? the living away from Him who has done so great things for me!

the being blessed by Him with health, and kind friends, and food and raiment, and all the faculties of mind and body, and so many senses to appreciate Him and His works, and yet not distinctly and thankfully to see his bounty in it all, nor to give him my heart in return, but to love the creature more than the Creator!

"But I have been made to think of these things since, and of others which I will not speak of now. And I see whose work it has been that I have been instructed in all this before my departure to other lands, where, perhaps, I should have had none to teach them to me. Never can I forget, or repay my obligations to that good man, my most kind benefactor and instructor, Mr. Waldy. 'The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day!'

"And, dear Miss Anneslie, I must just tell you how false that man spoke, when he said that I knew the wicked deed which he and his brother were going to do. I certainly did receive the ring from that other bad man, because I was afraid to refuse it; and so I was afraid not to wear it during the few days I was afterwards with those unhappy people. And the first thing almost I did after coming to Beechwood was to give it to Mr. Waldy. And this is the whole truth about it.

"You cannot think how kind every one is to me here. The governor seems scarcely to regard me as a prisoner; and Mrs. Thompson is quite a mother to me; and dear Mrs. Edwards is permitted to be with me several hours in the day. And I am told that the good kind people of Exeter take every opportunity of inquiring for me. And many persons of the highest rank, and particularly ladies, who were in the court that day, have requested to see me, but the

governor has very properly intimated that it is quite contrary to the regulations of the prison. I am grateful both for the request and the refusal, for who am I that such honour should be done me? It humbles me to think of it. I had such a kind, feeling letter, too, from my counsel, who pleaded so hard and earnestly for me; and he told me that he was commissioned by all his brother barristers, and especially by him who had been counsel for the crown, to express their deepest sympathy with me, and that they were consulting together how they might give me the proof of it. Alas! what can they do? I am sure that my counsel is a good man, for he bade me remember what he said to me at the trial, and that there is One who has promised 'to plead the cause of His people,' and who 'has never failed them that seek Him.'

"Mr. and Mrs. Western, however, pleading that they were personal friends of Mr. Anneslie and his family, were admitted to my little room. Nothing could exceed their kindness, and they spoke so feelingly about you all, dear Miss Anneslie, and I was so pleased to hear what they said. And that dear little Arthur Stanley came with them, and seated himself by me, and took my hand in his, as if I had been his sister, and his fine blue eyes were filled with tears, but he struggled hard that I should not see them. And when he had taken leave of me, and the door was closed, he called the governor aside, and whispered to him that *he thought Ellen Darnley would like a room with a little more sun in it, and where she could look out of the window.* I do not pretend, as some of my sisterhood do, to any skill in palmistry, or to read in the wandering stars the future destinies of the individual; but with every appearance of a healthy frame, and of bodily and mental vigour, Arthur

Stanley will be early removed. And happily, too, for himself; for where would he find in this world a kindred spirit? Such a mind, continually fretted with the littlenesses and selfishnesses with which it would have to do, would be in danger of preying on itself; such a heart, for ever checked and chilled in its generous emotions, would become either seared or broken; and such excellence might be wrecked. But this will not be permitted, and Arthur Stanley will early be taken away from the evil to come.

"I do not know when I am to go. I asked Mrs. Thompson yesterday how soon she thought it might be, and the good woman burst into tears. You will come to see me once more, dear Miss Anneslie; and I mean to ask your brother to go with me, as far as a convict may be attended by a friend.

With my most earnest prayers for health and every happiness to yourself and your father, and Mr. Herbert Anneslie, and to all who are dear to any of you,

"Believe me to be,

"My dear Miss Anneslie,

"Most gratefully and affectionately yours,

"ELLEN DARNLEY."

CHAPTER XXX.

LORD CLYDESDALE was a man of no less energy than benevolence. Unknown to me he had had an interview with the judge before whom Ellen Darnley was tried, and had learned from him that he had forwarded to the secretary of state the recommendation of the jury on her behalf, together with a

favourable representation of her case from himself:—but that he had feared at the time it would be unsuccessful, in consequence of the great increase of that particular species of crime within the last two or three years; as well as from the unavailing applications for mercy in several recent instances of forgery, in all of which the offenders had suffered the extreme penalty of the law; and it might be considered an undue exercise of the prerogative, to interpose in respect to a sentence so much more lenient as the one in question.

From the judge Lord Clydesdale had repaired to Ellen Darnley's counsel, who expressed his great satisfaction that his lordship had undertaken her case,—adding that, although they could not appear ostensibly in the matter, the members of the bar on the western circuit had come to the unanimous resolution of soliciting some individual of rank and influence to plead her cause with the Prince Regent, and that he had himself been commissioned to draw up a petition to be presented to his Royal Highness, which he begged now to place in his lordship's hands; assuring him that those most interested in his client's fate could not have desired a more able advocate.

The petition was concisely drawn up with remarkable tact and feeling; and thus armed, and strong in the justice and humanity of his mission, Lord Clydesdale was at two o'clock on this day—the day after our return from Elmsgrove—to be honoured with an audience by the Prince Regent. These particulars his lordship communicated to us at the breakfast table this morning.

Several circumstances combined at this conjuncture to favour our hopes. It was only at the beginning of the present month that, in consequence of the unhappy and confirmed malady of his august father, the regency of the united king-

doms of Great Britain and Ireland had been vested in the Prince of Wales; and it was not unreasonably hoped that the first appeal to royal clemency, which this was believed to be, might obtain some special consideration, particularly in the case of a female of Ellen Darnley's early years, and under her peculiar circumstances.

Added to which, it was plainly the policy of the Prince Regent to conciliate, by every means at his command, the confidence of that powerful party in the state to whose counsels he had decided to commit himself, and to which the Earl of Clydesdale belonged. As Prince of Wales, he had always avowedly attached himself to the Whigs. But as the interests are not always the same between the one in reversion and the other in possession, so was there a wide distinction between the heir apparent, colonel of a single regiment, and the same individual when invested with all the substantial attributes of royalty. Few kings ever sat on the English throne more imbued with monarchical ideas than George the Fourth. The real feelings of his heart were pre-eminently *Tory*. Although the Whigs had been the boon companions of his youth, although the wit and vivacity of the distinguished leaders of that party had charmed his imagination, and he had revelled with them in convivial excesses and nightly dissipation, and although they had maintained their acquired ascendancy over him in later life, yet the democratic tendencies of Whig principles were little in accordance with his kingly sentiments and predilections, quickened and confirmed as these had been by the recent example and warning consequences of the French revolution. Those, too, who had exercised the greatest influence over him, had passed or were passing away. It was a *Tory* ministry, moreover, which had upheld the throne of Great Britain

unimpaired and unshaken, whilst almost every other in Europe had been already subverted, or seemed to be tottering to its fall. A Tory general was at this moment pursuing his victorious career in Portugal and Spain, rekindling the well-nigh extinguished hopes of the brave and the true in every kingdom, reviving the desponding energies of prostrate nations, and changing the destinies of mankind. To have substituted another ministry, at such a period and under such auspices, would have been a measure at once the most impolitic and the most unpopular. Having determined, therefore, to continue the policy which had led, and was leading, to such happy and glorious results, the Prince Regent was naturally desirous to acquire the good-will of those whom he had hitherto systematically opposed, and to prove to them his desire cordially to co-operate with them. In this respect again, the crisis was propitious to the obtaining of any favour solicited by a stanch friend and zealous supporter of the existing government.

Accordingly, Lord Clydesdale met with a very gracious reception, and, bending low on one knee, received the extended hand and raised it to his lips.

"Rise, my Lord Clydesdale," said the prince; "we are ever pleased to see those about us whom we know to be so well affected towards ourselves, and so true to the best interests of their country."

His lordship rose, and gracefully bowed his acknowledgments.

"To what, beyond a dutiful consideration of ourselves, may we owe it," asked the prince, "that the Earl of Clydesdale has left the glades and the brakes of Devon and Atherstone, his eager hounds in the kennel, and his chafing steeds in their stalls?"

"May it please your royal highness to permit me to plead for the unhappy, for the young, and for the beautiful?"

"You open the case well, my lord, and engage our interest at once. What is your client's suit, in which our courts and ministers of justice fail to grant redress?"

"England's righteous laws are righteously administered, and her ermine is unsullied, most gracious prince; but judges and juries are human, and may err."

"Has your client, then, my lord, been the subject of some criminal prosecution, and you desire of us to reverse the sentence which one of our judges has decreed? Speak the circumstances of the cause you come to plead before us, or read it from your brief."

Thus commanded, Lord Clydesdale read to his royal master the eloquent and pathetic appeal which Ellen Darnley's counsel had placed in his hands. His own feelings kindled as he proceeded, and as the scene in court—the patient bearing of the beautiful girl throughout the day, and her pale senseless figure at the close of it—rose up to his mind, and seemed almost present to his view, his heart was in the cause, and he pleaded, from its generous impulse, more than had been written.

The prince also was evidently moved. His eyes were fixed on the frank and manly countenance of the nobleman who stood before him, like one of the chivalrous knights of yore, the champion of beauty in distress. "My lord," he said, "this fair damsel must be personally known to you; yours is not the advocacy of a stranger."

"I would that your royal highness knew her too, and had seen her as I have seen her," replied Lord Clydesdale, with a warmth of feeling and of manner which was not lost upon the prince, "and then the suit and the success would be in the pleader's hands."

The prince smiled, and good-humouredly said, "Fat and fair, then, of course, my lord; what says my Lady Clydesdale to this point?"

"Her ladyship has not had the opportunity of passing judgment, sire, but the ladies pronounce her a brunette."

"We crave your pardon, my lord," said the Prince, with becoming dignity, "for seeming to treat with a moment's levity your lordship's very serious appeal to us, and in truth we feel much interested ourselves in the case you have so generously undertaken. The prerogative of mercy towards one convicted by a jury and sentenced by a judge is a matter of most delicate handling, and we are new to the exercise of it. But this latter shall be an argument in your favour. Your lordship is our warrant that our clemency will not be extended to an unworthy subject. It is our maiden appeal, and the maiden shall be pardoned. Repair, my lord, to our secretary of state, and bid him attend us with the necessary document without delay, that we may affix to it our royal signature and seal."

"Most gracious master," returned Lord Clydesdale, with much emotion, and again bending on his knee, "may Britain's sceptre be long wielded by so merciful a hand! and may it some day be granted to your faithful subject and servant now before you to give proof of the gratitude and loyalty of his heart."

"We purpose to put those qualities, my lord, to no very distant test. We have heard much of the hospitalities of Atherstone, and the beauties of its noble domain, and we desire to judge for ourselves how far the sporting world correctly reports of your lordship's unrivalled establishment in hounds and horses. If your lordship and my Lady Clydesdale are returning to the country, we would presume upon

a welcome there before the hunting season has drawn to its close."

"Your royal highness would be conferring upon Atherstone the most distinguished honour which a subject can experience from his prince."

"We propose to be with you, then, my lord, next week; but our retinue will be small, for we purpose to forget for the time that we have anything to do with the trammels and incumbrances of state. We would see this fair damsel, moreover, for now-a-days heroes and heroines scarcely have existence save in romance, and we would fain set eyes on one in real life; bid her therefore, that she be in attendance upon us. And now, my lord, we bid you farewell."

Lord Clydesdale had told us that we might expect his return at about three o'clock. In the interval we were sitting in the drawing-room, that is, Lady Clydesdale, Miss De Vere, and myself. The ladies had their full share of interest on this occasion, and her ladyship had given orders that no visitors should be admitted. My own anxiety may be better conceived than expressed. Without appearing to notice it, but with a view of diverting my attention, Lady Clydesdale asked me to read to them some poetry, and Caroline De Vere put "Marmion" into my hands, declaring that she could never be tired of reading or hearing it. I had read the first canto, and was arrived in the second as far as the commencement of the trial of Constance—

"While round the fire such legends go,
Far different was the scene of woe,
Where, in a secret aisle beneath,
Council was held of life and death."

When I found myself unable to proceed, and saying—

"Dear ladies, this comes too near home," I laid down the book.

Caroline De Vere entered into some lively conversation in her own quiet, ladylike, unselfish manner, but I was unable to bear my part in it, and taking out my watch and finding it to be half-past three o'clock, I rose up from my chair, and went to see what was passing in the street. Punch was performing just opposite, with his squeaking voice, his grotesque figures, and his most doleful little dog. I remembered the same exhibition when I was quite a child; I became something in the same degree interested in its absurdities; the diminutive Don Juan was just going down to his place of torment, when Lord Clydesdale's carriage drove up to the door. To describe my feelings would be impossible. As his lordship alighted, I endeavoured to read some augury of the result of his mission, either in his countenance, or his step, or his manner; but he had been too long and too much conversant with the world to allow any outward indications to betray the thoughts and the feelings which were within.

As he ascended the stairs, however, Lady Clydesdale's ear detected in her noble lord somewhat different from his wont, for, turning towards me, she smiled, and said, "Take courage, Herbert; a quick step shows a light heart."

Lord Clydesdale entering the next moment, exclaimed, "All right, Herbert; fair ladies, all right." Then, throwing himself into his easy chair, he related to us what had passed at the audience with which he had been honoured by the Prince Regent, concluding with an intimation to Lady Clydesdale of the intended royal visit to Atherstone Park.

"And now, Herbert," said his lordship, with a cheerful countenance which spoke his own joy on the occasion, "I

think we have managed the affair this morning very satisfactorily. I called on the secretary of state on my way from the palace, as commanded, and the pardon is now being drawn out in due form. I thought you would like to be the bearer of it, and so asked, and have obtained permission, that you may be the government express. I was told that there was no time to be lost, and that all would be ready in an hour's time; so you had better take a bason of soup, which I have ordered into the breakfast room, and be off for the office without delay. They will give you there the proper instructions, and defray all your expenses."

I was about to express my gratitude for all he had done, when his lordship said, "Not a word on that subject. But before we part, tell me, would you like to go to India?"

"To India, my lord?" I answered, in astonishment.

"Yes, Herbert, to India. A long way off, is it not? A commission in the East India Company's army has been offered to me, and I am sure," he added, in the kindest manner, "I cannot bestow it on a more deserving young man; and if you accept it, I think I can obtain for you the next vacancy on the General's staff. But do not decide hastily, nor without consulting your father on the subject."

"I cannot thank your lordship sufficiently for all your kindness to me," I replied; "I shall be at Beechwood in the course of to-morrow, and will speak to my father about it."

"We shall soon follow you," observed his lordship, "for we must make preparations for the reception of the Prince Regent at Atherstone; and besides, I long to be again in the field. You can give me your answer when we meet. So now despatch your hasty dinner, and then speed on your way to poor Ellen Darnley."

With a heart too full to speak, I took my silent leave of these generous and noble-minded friends—received their hearty congratulations—found Lord Clydesdale's carriage waiting for me at the door, and drove off to the office of the secretary of state.

I was there warned that the order for the removal of the convicts had been issued, and that there was not an hour to be lost. And as the royal command was urgent, I was instantly despatched in a chaise and four, and directed to proceed in the same manner to Exeter, being furnished with ample funds for the occasion. As Beechwood was scarcely out of the way, I ventured to shape my course thither—arrived the next morning just as my father and Jane were sitting down to breakfast—told them mine errand—swallowed one cup of tea—and then, with scarcely the delay of a quarter of an hour, away we all hastened on the road to Exeter.

CHAPTER XXXI.

“WHAT is it that so distresses you this morning, my dear Mrs. Thompson,” said Ellen Darnley, looking up from her writing, and addressing that kind friend, who was sitting beside her. “I asked you a few days ago if you knew when I was to leave you, and you burst into tears. And you are weeping now, and I am sure that it is in some way on my account. Tell me what it is, my dear friend, for, of course, I am prepared for it. I know I am to go, and how I am to go, and where I am to go, and that it is only a

matter of time, a few days sooner or later. So now tell me the worst, for you see I am quite prepared."

"Dear Ellen," replied Mrs. Thompson, whilst her emotion almost choked her utterance, "the order for removal has arrived."

"Well," said Ellen, "it is only what we have been expecting, dear Mrs. Thompson,—and when is it to be?"

"How shall I tell you, dear Ellen? But you shall know it at once—the day after to-morrow;" and Mrs. Thompson turned away her face to hide her tears.

"The day after to-morrow!" repeated Ellen, and the pen dropped from her hand.

But recovering herself, and observing Mrs. Thompson's distress, she affectionately took her hand, and said again, "My dear kind friend, it is only what we have been expecting."

"I could have wished," she presently resumed, "to have seen once more those dear friends from Beechwood, but," and she mused for a few moments—"but perhaps it is better not."

"And now, dear Mrs. Thompson," she said, "come and sit down by me. I shall not, perhaps, be able to thank you as I ought to do for all the kindness and affection you have shown me, if I put it off to the last hour of my being with you. Words cannot express what I feel. It seems to me as if troubles had been sent only to give me new friends, and to teach me that as God has raised them up to me in a prison, so He can and will do in a strange land. And may He ever be your friend, dear Mrs. Thompson, who has made you so kind an one to me! Refer everything to him—all your cares, and your wants, and your wishes; it is not long that we shall want anything in this world, may He quicken

your wants and mine for the things of another! And I charge you, dear Mrs. Thompson, to thank the governor from me for all the sympathy and consideration he has so invariably shown me; and assure him that wherever I may go the remembrance of it will go with me, and there too will my prayers be offered up for his temporal and spiritual welfare. And you must say to all the others how truly I have felt their kindness, and that there is nothing which they have done for me, or shall do for other poor creatures, which shall not be repaid them by Him, who hears the mournings of such as are in captivity, and before whom the sorrowful sighing of the prisoner comes.

"And now, my dear Mrs. Thompson, will you be so kind as to send to Mrs. Edwards, and tell her that I wish she would come to me earlier to-day than usual, that is, as soon as she receives the message."

That fond and faithful friend was not long in obeying the summons. There are feelings which language is too poor to express, and such were those with which good Mrs. Edwards entered Ellen's cell, and heard how soon she was to be separated from one whom she loved with almost more than a mother's affection. Ellen was lying down, and held out her burning hand. Few words passed. Mrs. Edwards' grief was too great for utterance, excepting by tears, which, despite her powerful and disciplined mind, chased each other down her cheeks. Ellen had no tears to shed; but her throbbing temples, and the whiteness of her parched and quivering lips, showed the intensity of the mental conflict which was going on within.

"Dear Mrs. Edwards," she presently said, "half-raising herself up, and leaning on one elbow, "let me lay my head on your bosom; I cannot rest upon my pillow.

"You must go over to Beechwood immediately after I am gone," she continued, after an interval of some minutes, "and tell Miss Anneslie that I went off quite as well as you could have expected, and that my health had not suffered; and that I was quite prepared for my departure, well knowing that I was going out under the protection of Him who has been my keeper and guide all my life through."

She paused, and moved herself a little here and there, as if she was seeking some easy position, which she could not find.

"And you must tell them that my last thoughts were about them and about yourself, dear Mrs. Edwards; and say to them that it is only for seven years. And this must be *your* comfort. And seven years will soon be gone; and then I hope I shall find you all well and happy, and still living at dear Beechwood, or near it—just by Elton Hill, you know, dear Mrs. Edwards," she said, with a faint smile.

Again she paused, but her aged friend saw that her thoughts were busy, and did not interrupt the course of them.

"And poor Mr. Waldy," she presently said; "you must speak very kindly to him from me, and say that I shall ever remember all his goodness to me, and especially the farewell which he took of me, and the parting gift which he gave me. And tell him that I hope I shall have grace to make the best use of it, and that my prayer will ever be that he may experience that comfort himself which he has taught me to look for there."

"How merrily the bells are ringing!" she suddenly exclaimed, raising up her head, and a gleam of animation passed over her beautiful features. "I am so fond of bells, you know; but I shall not hear them where I am going;

perhaps this is the last peal I shall ever hear. I dare say there has been a wedding this morning, and I hope it will be a happy one. I used to like so much the sweet bells of Beechwood, and have sat down on a bank to listen to them, for an hour together. And I hope they will soon ring for Mr. Herbert Anneslie and Miss Fanny Cranstoun," she added, speaking in a lower voice; "for I know that he loves her, and I believe that she is a sweet, amiable creature, and I am sure Mr. Herbert Anneslie deserves to be happy. Dear Mrs. Edwards, you must tell me all you know about him, whenever you write."

And again she laid her head on that friendly bosom.

A step was heard at this moment approaching the door. It was opened; and Mrs. Thompson entering, asked if Mr. Howard might be admitted to see his patient.

"I am come, my dear young friend, to inquire after your health, and to see what service I can be so happy as to render to you to-day," said the latter, taking Ellen's hand in the kindest manner.

"Thank you, Mr. Howard," she replied; "I am quite well."

"This hand and this pulse tell a different tale," he returned, shaking his head and smiling.

"You have received some intelligence to-day, which has distressed you," he said, with great gentleness and delicacy; "but it was incorrect, was it not, Mrs. Thompson?"

"Quite so, dear Ellen; I *did* give you very wrong information," said the latter, almost unable to repress her feelings, or so to limit the intelligence which her heart was bursting to tell.

"There are many by whom Miss Darnley is appreciated, and who feel the most lively interest in her," said Mr.

Howard, seating himself in the chair which Mrs. Edwards had vacated; "I am but the precursor of other friends who are anxious to see her, and who are waiting for admittance."

"I feel their kindness and your own very sincerely, Mr. Howard," replied the poor girl, in a low yet firm voice, "but unless they are indeed very old friends, I must beg to decline seeing them so close upon the eve of my departure."

"They are indeed very old friends—tried and true friends—friends who have appealed to the Prince Regent to reverse a most unmerited sentence, and who hope to make some amends, by the proofs of their esteem and affection, for the sufferings which a wicked tongue and a perjured witness have been permitted to inflict."

"Oh, Mr. Howard!" she replied, much agitated, "you must not weaken my resolution by holding out hopes which can never be realized. I am convinced their generous efforts will be unavailing."

"I would not have spoken of hope," returned Mr. Howard, "were I not quite sure that so unjust a doom will be reversed, and that innocence, in this instance at least, will be vindicated."

He paused for a moment, and Mrs. Edwards said,—

"What is it, Mr. Howard, which you have heard? I know you would not have spoken in this manner if you had not heard something more than mere rumour; you would not so have trifled with the feelings of this dear girl."

"I have indeed heard, Mrs. Edwards, that the efforts made have been attended with success, and that the Prince Regent has received the representation which has been made to him very graciously."

He paused again—"I have heard, indeed, that a pardon has been granted."

Then saying that he would return in a few minutes, he left the room, whilst Mrs. Thompson, as had been concerted between them, communicated to poor Ellen that her pardon had arrived, and that Mr. Herbert Anneslie, with his father and sister, were waiting in an adjoining room for permission to see her.

And what ensued? Ellen neither fainted nor wept, but she knelt down by her prison bed, and from a full, and grateful, and innocent heart, devoted her life henceforth to the service of Him in whose hand is the king's heart, and who turneth it whithersoever He will.

The necessary preliminaries having been gone through, and Ellen having taken a very affectionate and affecting farewell of Mrs. Thompson, and a very grateful one of the governor, we passed from the cell through the courts, which, by the governor's kind consideration, were silent and vacant—alas! how many aching hearts were we leaving behind us!—to the prison gates, where I had ordered a chaise, with a box in front for two, to be in waiting. To my astonishment, I saw a very handsome barouche-and-four, the horses and postillions being decorated with streamers and rosettes of blue ribbon. Here, too, we found assembled a number of spectators, whose cheers, as we made our appearance, spoke the interest which poor Ellen's case had so universally excited. We hastily took our seats, the ladies entering the carriage, and my father and myself mounting the box. But it was evidently the preconcerted arrangement of the assembly around us, that we should not at once proceed. With the utmost respect, but in the most undeniable manner, they barred the way. To the first cheers, a perfect silence had ensued.

“Ellen Darnley, a long and a happy life to her! and may

innocence ever find a protector!" exclaimed a loud and distinct voice; and the cry was taken up by the rest, and repeated again and again with the most deafening cheers. The enthusiasm was not to be controlled, whilst she, who was the object of it all, sunk back in the carriage, abashed and confounded, and burst into tears. My father and I took off our hats, and stood up uncovered, the only return we could make for the generous welcome we were receiving, and for demeanour as respectful as the acclamations were joyous and hearty.

When these had at length subsided, the same commanding voice exclaimed again, "Long live the Prince Regent! mercy is the brightest jewel of the crown!" and again the voices of the multitude responded to the loyal call.

Some individual there evidently was whom all the rest obeyed, and who marshalled and arrayed his heterogeneous forces as coolly, as methodically, and as despotically, as ever commander-in-chief did his disciplined battalions on the field of battle.

I now made signs that I wished to speak. "Silence," shouted the same voice as before;—and silence there was.

"My kind and generous friends," I said, speaking at the top of my voice, "the tribute which you have just paid to justice and humanity does you infinite honour, and proves you worthy of the title which you bear—the highest of earthly distinctions—THE FREE-BORN CHILDREN OF BRITISH SOIL. Be assured that Ellen Darnley is deeply sensible of the friendly sentiments which you have expressed towards her; and she begs you to accept through me her most grateful acknowledgments, and her best wishes for you all. Peace be within your walls, and plenteousness within your dwellings! In your loyal sentiments also do we most heartily and thankfully

join; long live the Prince Regent, prosperity to his royal house, and blessings on this exercise of his mercy! But, my good and excellent friends, there is a nobleman of your own county, whose name and whose services must not be forgotten or omitted on this memorable occasion; and whose generous and powerful intercession with his royal master has rescued the innocent from exile, and restored the lovely and the beloved to her home and her friends. This act of grace has been solicited and obtained by the Earl of Clydesdale."

I had no sooner ceased than the spokesman of the people, the number of whom was every moment increasing, addressed them as follows:—

"Listen to me, my friends and fellow citizens. We have just learned that the Earl of Clydesdale is the noble individual who has stepped in between the severity of the law and its devoted victim, and whose promised intercession, though the name had not transpired, has alone prevented a petition to the throne, bearing the signature of every hand of the multitude around me, and of many thousands besides. It has been an act worthy of his generous character—worthy of his illustrious name and house—worthy of an English nobleman!"—"Worthy of a fox hunter," interrupted a voice from the crowd. "Well!" said the former speaker, "I take up that word—'worthy of a fox-hunter!'—And now, my friends, let us give the Earl of Clydesdale a *view halloo* worthy the occasion." He then led the cheers, and his followers, fully acting up to his instructions, gave utterance to such a burst of popular exultation as I never before or since have heard. At a signal given, the ranks were then opened, and amid shouting and waving of hats, which we answered, as best we might, by still standing up with our hats in our

hands, and bowing as we passed along, we were conveyed away at a rapid pace from this extraordinary scene.

Nor was the interest which had been so remarkably evinced confined to the demonstration of it which I have just mentioned. Every tower and steeple was sending forth its peal. We passed none, but they gave us some token of sympathy and respect—gentlemen taking off their hats, and ladies waving their handkerchiefs.

From the summit of a lofty hill we looked back for the last time upon the metropolis of the west; and the recollections of that moment what pen can describe?—what time can obliterate?

It appears that the postboys who drove me from the office of the secretary of state, had by some means become possessed of the secret of my mission, so far as that I was the bearer of the royal pardon to some female in the prison of Exeter. This information, of course, was communicated from stage to stage, so that it travelled with every relay simultaneously with the mandate and its bearer. At Beechwood the *name* had transpired, and the drivers into Exeter, on their arrival early in the afternoon at the principal hotel, had told the tidings before they had loosened the traces from the carriage. The landlord, determined upon getting up some demonstration of rejoicing, immediately went to Mr. —, the largest brewer in the city, a person of immense influence with the people, possessing a commanding figure, a powerful voice, and a ready eloquence,—qualifications just suiting him to be a popular leader; a man, moreover, of the utmost integrity, a true patriot, who loved his king and his country, venerated her institutions, and revered her laws. He had been one of those who had taken a deep interest in the trial, and had subsequently set on foot a petition to the

throne for mercy, which he had only withdrawn on the assurance of Mr. Western, that the cause was in the hands of a powerful nobleman, a great favourite at court. On the first intelligence of the royal pardon, he had sent to the ringers of the parish church, of which he was churchwarden, directing them to commence ringing immediately, and not to desist until they should hear from him; and this was the peal which had attracted the attention of poor Ellen, little imagining what was the occasion of it. He next despatched emissaries to summon all the people whom they could muster to assemble at a particular place, where they would receive instructions from himself. The delay occasioned by my visit to the under-sheriff to place the royal mandate in his hands, —to Mr. Western, just to tell him the happy tidings,—and to Mr. Howard, to ask him to prepare Ellen for the reception of them, with the absence of that latter gentleman when I first called—gave time for Mr. ——'s proceedings, who determined that the reprieve of the innocent (for such he was persuaded she was) from a most unjust sentence should be distinguished by all the *éclat* which the citizens of Exeter could bestow upon it. The landlord resolved that a handsome carriage, and four of his best horses, should not be wanting on his part; and his wife and daughters contributed the ribbons and rosettes.

We wished Mrs. Edwards and Ellen to remain with us at Beechwood that night; but the former begged to be permitted to go on to her own little cottage, and Ellen was resolute to accompany her.

CHAPTER XXXII.

WE had reached home at so late an hour, that we agreed not to communicate to Mr. Waldy what had taken place until the next morning. And I was happy to hear my father express his intention of walking over to him early, so as to anticipate any rumours which might be afloat.

On his return, he told me that Mr. Waldy was looking exceedingly ill, and heard of Ellen's pardon with the most unwonted emotion; that he set off immediately to Mrs. Edwards' cottage, and particularly desired to see me to-morrow, as soon as I had breakfasted.

I went accordingly, and was painfully struck with his altered appearance. He was pale, and there was an anxiety and restlessness in the eye, such as nothing but acute bodily suffering or keen mental agony imparts.

"Herbert," he said, "I saw Ellen yesterday, and she is persuaded that she owes her rescue from exile and ignominy to you—that is, from the full amount of ignominy which was awaiting her,—for none can wholly clear up her innocence, or save her from shame and reproach in the estimation of those who know not all the facts. I am thankful, however, for the mercy and deliverance which you have been so instrumental in obtaining for her. I would that my cold seared heart felt it as it ought to do! Tell me the history of it."

I complied with his request.

"Herbert," he said, after I had concluded, "the unhappy fate of my child—the innocent offspring of a most guilty father—haunts me night and day, and since I saw you last, food has scarcely passed my lips, or sleep closed my eyes.

To have had her pardoned, and restored to the safe keeping of Mrs. Edwards, and to the comforts of her little home, I thought, only two days since, would have left me little else to wish for or to be anxious about. You and Lord Clydesdale have effected this; but alas! a mind at ease I can never know. Ellen is all gratitude and cheerfulness, but then she has that which I have not—a pure heart and a quiet conscience. And yet she has enemies, and so have you, Herbert, and so have I.”

“To what do you allude, sir?” I asked.

“I have received, Herbert, of late many anonymous intimations, reflecting on Ellen and yourself, and on the terms on which you are with each other. Yes, Herbert, that is just the look I expected—the flush of scorn and indignation, not the paleness and confusion of guilt. They who are strong in their integrity need fear nothing which wicked hearts and false tongues may do or say against them. But, Herbert, I have no such defence; and so, whilst others when assailed are cheerful and unconcerned, I am gloomy, and suspicious, and full of fears, and tortured by every knavish tongue which moves itself against me. Circumstances have occurred, and communications have been made to me, which fill me with uneasiness and apprehension.

“Some weeks ago, a few days before your unfortunate encounter with Mr. Dastard, a person called upon me, of most unprepossessing appearance, and yet with the air and manners of a gentleman, and told me such a plausible story of his having been once in better circumstances, of the vast expectations which he once had, and of the abject penury to which he was now reduced, that I gave him a trifling sum; and two days after, on receiving a letter from him stating that he had an opportunity of obtaining a situation

in the excise, if he could only command twenty pounds to discharge some debts he had incurred, and fit himself out with a decent dress, I sent him an order on my bankers at Exeter for that amount, payable to George Johnstone, for such he told me was his name. From that time I had neither seen nor heard of him, until a letter arrived by the post, three days ago, with the same signature, mentioning that the writer was the individual whom I had twice relieved, and that he much wished to see me, as he had something of importance to myself to communicate. Believing his object to be only to obtain more money from me, I wrote in reply, that I must decline seeing him, and that whatever he had to say he might tell me by letter. Last evening, at about seven o'clock, the door-bell was rung, and on the servant going to answer it, a man rushed past her into the room where I was sitting, and I saw the same ill-looking fellow as before. On my demanding his business, he behaved in so insolent a manner—saying that he knew things of me which I little suspected, and could if he pleased strip me of my sanctimonious garb, and expose me to public scorn and abhorrence—that I took him by the collar and forced him out of the house, locking and barring the door against him. This morning at break of day a man on horseback delivered to my servant the note I now put into your hand, and immediately departed."

"The undersigned warns Mr. Waldy not to treat the words which he spoke last night, or those which he now writes, as containing a mere idle menace, or a vague and indefinite allusion. Time and accident bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and the sins of youth sometimes scare the visions of manhood. Has Mr. Waldy any secret thoughts associated with the North Riding of York-

shire, or with an infant's grave in a little village churchyard, or with a poor widow living hard by? May be the writer knows more than these bare outlines of Mr. Waldy's story, but he pledges himself that the secret shall never transpire, and that Mr. Waldy shall never see, or hear from or of him again, on his receiving the sum of five hundred pounds to convey him across the Atlantic, and to enable him to commence, in a land where he is not known, a new course of life in some honest and laborious calling. Mr. Waldy can negotiate the affair as he may think proper, and demand what security he will for being free from all further importunity or future applications, in conference with Mr. Subtle, of Crane Court, Exeter, who is authorized to act in behalf of—GEORGE JOHNSTONE."

"The villain!" I exclaimed, as I gave back the letter to Mr. Waldy; "depend upon it, sir, you will see the downfall of that man."

"But you will see the downfall of me, Herbert," he replied; "the plot thickens, and the final catastrophe is near. I was once a proud man, and I fear that I am not yet sufficiently humbled. As a boy, I scorned everything mean or disingenuous, but it was on a principle of pride. The same feelings and the same principle I carried with me to the University, and thence into the world. I have been considered always as a man of honour and integrity. I am regarded now as a man of piety and devotion, and although I cannot lay to my charge here anything opposed to a desire and endeavour to be humbly and unobtrusively such, and although the very reputation is galling to me when I think what I have been; yet to have my shame revealed, to be branded as a hypocrite, to be held up to mockery and derision, is a thought which I cannot endure. However he

attained to it, my assailant has plainly some knowledge of facts, the bare mention of which would bring ruin on my character, and with which the untiring industry of malice and revenge would not be long in connecting other circumstances, until the whole tale of my guilt and dishonour was blazoned forth to the world, and poor Ellen again involved in the sorrows and the infamy of her father's sins. And yet, Herbert, dearly as I prize honour, lightly as I regard everything else, I would not hold the former at the purchase of a bribe, nor pension my good name on the silence or secrecy of any man, though five hundred pence would seal the bond indissolubly for ever. I am a sinner in the hands of God, and he may in righteous judgment deliver me into the power of evil men, but I will not sell myself to them."

"Sir, I honour you for it," I replied, "and whatever evil men may be permitted to do against you, be assured that all who know you regard you with the truest affection, and not less with the highest esteem and respect."

"And now, Herbert," said Mr. Waldy, "I must retire. If anything should occur in which I should need the assistance of a friend, or of one to whom to unburden a burdened mind, you shall hear from me."

We then parted; and as I slowly returned home, I found myself almost unconsciously repeating the lines of the poet—

"High minds, of native pride and force
Most deeply feel thy pangs—Remorse!
Fear, for their scourge, mean villains have,
Thou art the torturer of the brave!"

The intended visit of the Prince Regent to Atherstone Park, duly announced in the Court Circular, was the talk of the whole neighbourhood, and put some of the good

people into a state of no little excitement. The noble host and hostess, however, had lived too much in high life to be disturbed by it. The seat of Lord Clydesdale was a princely mansion, and the table and establishment maintained there were on a scale suitable to the owner's high rank and great affluence. And as his Royal Highness had expressed his pleasure to be received merely as a prince of the blood, little preparation was required.

On my return from Mrs. Edwards' cottage, two days after my last-mentioned interview with Mr. Waldy, I found that Lady Clydesdale and Miss De Vere, having arrived at Atherstone Park on the preceding day, had driven over to Beechwood to ask my father and sister to one of a series of entertainments to be given to the aristocracy of the neighbourhood on occasion of the visit of the prince. "I dare say we shall see Mr. Herbert Anneslie at Atherstone before that," said her ladyship, kindly. "And pray tell him," said Miss De Vere, "that Fanny Cranstoun is well enough to have returned to town."

The next morning I rode over to Atherstone.

"I did not include you, yesterday, in the formal invitation to dinner," said Lady Clydesdale, "because we expect you to come and remain with us a few days, and I felt sure that we should see you to-day."

Lord Clydesdale then asked me if I had made up my mind about going to India, to which I answered that it was my intention to accept the appointment which he had so kindly offered me.

"You have done right, my boy," he returned. "I wish you every success, and depend upon it you shall want no influence which I may possess to promote it.

"The Prince Regent," he added, "arrives on Tuesday, to

dinner. We shall expect you on that day to stay with us ; and remember that, during the short time you are yet to remain in England, we shall always be happy to see you at Atherstone, to come and go as you like."

I thanked his lordship and Lady Clydesdale for their great kindness, and took my leave.

On entering the drawing-room on the Tuesday evening, I found Lord Clydesdale with a party of gentlemen only, the great gathering not commencing until the following day. I instantly recognised Lord George —, with three or four other courtly personages, attendants upon the prince. The rest of the company were residents in the neighbourhood, with all of whom I was more or less acquainted. Neither Lady Clydesdale nor Miss De Vere were in the room. No one had as yet seen the prince, who, immediately on his arrival, had been conducted to the suite of apartments prepared for him.

From the short and broken conversation which ensued, and the looks continually directed towards the entrance, we were all of us evidently in a state of expectation.

It was not long before the folding doors leading from the hall into the drawing-room were thrown open, and two attendants, each bearing a wax light in either hand, appeared. Next entered the prince, with an air of grace, freedom, and dignity united, not to be described, dressed with the greatest elegance, and wearing the order of the garter. Lord Clydesdale had advanced to receive him, which he did just within the doors, with a deference due to his royal guest, and with a well-bred ease and self-possession peculiarly his own. Having then conducted the prince to the sofa, his lordship introduced to him by name each of the strangers present. The prince then turned and conversed with Lord Clydesdale, still standing, as, of course, did all the rest.

Presently the doors were again thrown open, and Lady Clydesdale entered with Miss De Vere on her left arm. The prince advanced to meet her, and gracefully and graciously bowed, with his right hand brought almost close upon the region of the heart; her ladyship with equal grace, and with all becoming humility, making a deep courtesy. After exactly the proper pause the courtesy was repeated—the prince with his hand still upon his breast—when her ladyship begged permission to introduce to his royal highness the Honourable Caroline De Vere, and courtsied again. The prince again bowed, and Miss De Vere courtsied low. The prince then gave his left arm to Lady Clydesdale, and led her to the sofa; and after a few moments' conversation, made an inclination of the head, in token that the ladies might be seated.

To myself and others, who were not versed in court etiquette, it was an interesting scene. I should term it a fine piece of acting, only that nothing like it was ever done on the stage, nor ever will be until kings and peers and peeresses shall undertake the characters, and perform there in their own proper persons.

The prince did not long keep us standing on the return to the drawing-room after dinner, but seating himself by Lady Clydesdale, all present understood that they were at liberty to sit or stand, read or converse, as they pleased.

The next day, there was a grand meet, with a public breakfast, at Atherstone. Notice had been given of the occasion in all the daily papers, and the muster was beyond precedent. There were sportsmen from hunts three days' distance off, whose horses had for the last eight and forty hours filled every vacant stall within seven miles of the spot. It may therefore well be concluded that none from the more immediate hunts were wanting. For sight-seeing, too, it

was just the time of the year and the day. It was an early spring. The trees and the hedges, and the Maythorn bush had put forth their beautiful green. The groves and the woods were full of song. The lark was soaring and carolling aloft; and the thrush, the sweetest of all the choir, seated conspicuous on a towering branch, was pouring forth his rich and melodious notes. The furze was fragrant in bloom, and the busy swarm, buzzing and flitting around, were sipping nectar out of golden cups. The sun shone bright and warm, and all nature was lovely. But alas! for sport in the garish month of March! No sportsman expected it. But even had there been no *find*, there was a sight amply to have recompensed the most distant dweller who had travelled thither that day. The varied scenery of the noble and extensive park, the beautiful rise and fall of its grounds, its stately trees, and the flanking woods in the distance—the magnificent edifice in the centre, where the lordly owner lived in generous but unostentatious hospitality, and where art vied with nature to captivate the imagination of the beholder—the scarlet coats without number, grouped in parties, or riding slowly and singly among the trees, interspersed here and there with the elegant forms, the feathered hats and long-skirted dresses of fairer equestrians:—the gorgeous equipages which thronged the roads, with vehicles of humbler grade, and the thousands of pedestrians of either sex whom the occasion had invited forth, for orders had been issued to the several lodges that none should be excluded—Lord Clydesdale mounted on a favourite roan, his horn at his saddle-bow, and his pack gathered around him, just ready to throw off—his royal highness the Prince Regent, riding with Lady Clydesdale, a little apart from the rest, not more distinguished by his milk white

steed than by his noble figure and his gallant bearing, "the observed of all observers"—it was altogether a gay and splendid spectacle, well worth the having come any distance to witness. Sportsmen saw one of the finest hunting establishments in the world; and sight-seers had nothing left to wish for. A *find* there was, enough to give the music of the pack, and to add to the liveliness and excitement of the scene; but sport, in hunting parlance, there was none. No gallant burst across the open into the vale beyond, put the speed and mettle of the horse that day, or the courage of his rider, to the test.

In the evening there was a brilliant display of beauty and fashion, ostrich feathers forming the distinguishing character of the head-dress of the ladies, a circumstance I well remember, because I have never seen any since half so graceful and becoming. Among the guests was the high-sheriff, whom I had lately met on a far other occasion, and who did me the honour to introduce me to his lady, one of the finest women in the room. I received their congratulations on Ellen Darnley's pardon, and was proceeding to give an account of Lord Clydesdale's generous and successful mediation with the Prince Regent in her behalf, when that nobleman came up to me to say that his royal highness commanded my attendance.

It appeared that the same subject had formed the topic of conversation in that part of the room where the prince was seated, for the latter immediately addressed me—

"It has just been mentioned to us, Mr. Anneslie, that you have been by no means an uninterested party, in respect to the petition lately presented to us by my Lord Clydesdale in favour of a young gipsy girl to whom we have extended the royal prerogative of mercy. We doubt not she is at large, and restored to her friends?"

I answered that she was, and deeply penetrated with a sense of what she owed to his royal highness's goodness and clemency.

"Did you not say, my lord," asked the prince, turning to his noble host, "that this young girl had received a good education, and was an interesting person?"

"She has been educated at the expense and under the superintendence of an elderly and most benevolent gentleman of the name of Waldy, living at Beechwood," replied his lordship, "and is certainly a most engaging person."

"We conclude, Mr. Anneslie," said the prince, smiling, and speaking hardly above a whisper, "this is a love affair between you and this pretty gipsy?"

I respectfully entered a disclaimer.

"No?" returned the prince, in astonishment; "a romantic tale—a pretty gipsy girl—and no love in the matter? I cannot comprehend this?"

"And yet, your royal highness, there is a great deal of romance in the matter," observed Lord Clydesdale. "Mr. Anneslie's acquaintance with Ellen Darnley commenced in very early life, and under circumstances which opened a new phasis of society to him among your royal highness's liege subjects."

"We should like to hear your own version of it, Mr. Anneslie; a touch of the marvellous would wonderfully set off this every-day life of ours. But bear in mind that we are not so insatiate of details as our learned judges and unlearned juries are."

Thus commanded, and the company generally being invited by the prince to partake of the entertainment, I proceeded to tell the tale as concisely as I could; and as all appeared to listen with real interest, I was enabled, perhaps, to acquit

myself of a part, thus unexpectedly assigned me, with some degree of spirit.

"And could not judge or jury distinguish that this was truth?" exclaimed the prince, when I had concluded. "We must see this heroine of romance ourselves; was not this in the bond, my lord?"

"I have not seen her since your royal highness was graciously pleased to confer on her your royal favour," answered Lord Clydesdale, "but she is residing within a few miles of Atherstone."

"Oh!" said the prince, "Mr. Annealie knows the locality of her abode. And if my Lady Clydesdale has no objection, we will commission him to summon hither the worthy old gentleman and his fair protégée."

"Your royal highness's pleasure is ever a pleasing command to your loyal subjects," replied Lady Clydesdale; "and I have myself the greatest desire to see this paragon of beauty."

This was said in so graceful a manner, and so much as if it was the very truth from the heart, that the prince smiled, and made her a courteous bow. Then turning to me, he said,—

"Mr. Annealie, we desire that you convey to Mr. Waldy our pleasure, that he and his pretty pupil attend upon us here to-morrow in the afternoon."

I made a lowly obeisance and retired to another part of the room.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE Prince's associates through life had usually been men rather distinguished by the brilliancy of their wit and

their conversational talents, than by any more real and substantial merit. Some few, however, of a different caste were occasionally admitted to his favour; and one of the most estimable of these exceptions was Lord George —, now in attendance upon his royal highness at Atherstone Park. I had at first regarded this nobleman only with a jealous and jaundiced eye, as a suitor of Fanny Cranstoun, but I now learned to do him justice. He was young, handsome, and most prepossessing in manners and appearance; of an open and amiable disposition; of the strictest honour and integrity; frank and easy towards his equals, kind and affable to those beneath him. In addition to all these personal attractions, he had great wealth and noble estates. No wonder then that Mr. and Mrs. Cranstoun should desire him for a son-in-law.

What I had not discovered of these qualities and circumstances respecting his lordship from my own observation, I had become acquainted with through Caroline De Vere.

I thought of it all as I was proceeding, early on the following morning, on my mission to Mr. Waldy and Ellen, and the conflicting passions and sentiments which contended for the mastery within me are not to be described. I knew Lord George to be a suitor of Fanny, and I now knew him to be worthy of her. I knew, also, from my recent experience of Mr. and Mrs. Cranstoun's disposition towards me, that, even were I to possess her affections, she never could be mine on such terms as I ought to sue to her, that is, with the consent of her parents. I had, moreover, just resolved on an absence from her of many years, by my acceptance of a military appointment in India. Ought I, then, in any degree to be an obstacle to her union with one so calculated in all respects to make her happy? Ought I to desire—ought I to permit

it? The case stood on a new and different footing from what it had done before, now that I was acquainted with the real character and merits of her high-born and noble-minded lover. Duty and honour seemed to point but to one course, and that course, if I aspired to *deserve* the hand which I was forbidden to aspire to *possess*, it became me instantly to pursue. The victory, however, was not at once gained. Memory *would* go back to past scenes; the heart *would* dwell upon hopes which it had once cherished. Short was the interval since I had called at Mr. Cranstoun's, in Berkeley Square, with a palpitating heart, for the very purpose of seeing his lovely daughter; and little more than a week had elapsed since I had rescued her from a watery grave, had borne her insensible to the sofa in the drawing-room at Elmsgrove, and had looked upon her for the last time. But I finally took my resolution to sacrifice every other consideration to what I believed would be for Fanny's welfare and happiness; and, as a first step, to regard her from this moment an object, of the most ardent affection, indeed, but as lost to me for ever.

These thoughts occupied my mind until I came within sight of Mrs. Edwards's cottage, where I imagined it was not unlikely that I might find Mr. Waldy, and so have no occasion to proceed to Beechwood. I now began to reflect how, circumstanced as I knew him to be, the summons to appear at Lord Clydesdale's before the Prince Regent might be received by him. With his lordship I knew him to be only slightly acquainted, having been quite accidentally introduced to him at my father's, when we were living at Beechwood Lodge, since which time I had reason to believe that they had never met. As for Ellen, she had experienced so great a boon at the hands of both, that I could scarcely

regret her having personally to appear before the prince and the earl.

As I had conjectured, Mr. Waldy was at the cottage, early as was the hour, engaged in giving instruction to Ellen. Having asked to see him alone, I communicated to him the desire of the Prince Regent that he should attend upon him that day, at two o'clock in the afternoon; adding, as particularly charged to do by Lord Clydesdale, a polite message, expressive of his lordship's sincere pleasure in this opportunity of seeing him at Atherstone Park. He simply answered that he must, of course, obey the royal command. Ellen, on hearing the purport of my visit, gently expressed her satisfaction that she should now have an opportunity of testifying her gratitude to her benefactors. Mr. Waldy immediately set out on his return home, to prepare himself for appearing in the royal presence, directing Ellen to do the same, and saying that he would call for her in good time. Mrs. Edwards then gave me some breakfast, and, my mission having been performed, I again mounted my horse, and rode back slowly and thoughtfully to Atherstone Park.

On reaching the lodge, I observed a gentleman walking with a very leisurely step towards the house, and every now and then looking back, as if in expectation of some one. I had no sooner entered the gates than he turned round, and advanced to meet me. It was Lord George.

On our meeting, he politely took off his hat, and asked if I would allow him a few minutes' conversation.

"Certainly, my lord," I replied, taking off my hat in return, and alighting from my horse.

"I have not the honour of your acquaintance, Mr. Anneslie," began his lordship, "but you are a guest under Lord Clydesdale's roof, where none but men of honour enter, and

I must therefore apologize for so abruptly seeking this interview."

"No apology is necessary, my lord," I replied.

"A communication, Mr. Anneslie, has been made this morning to the Prince Regent. According to etiquette, it could not have been received; but his royal highness, having dispensed on this occasion with the formalities by which he is usually surrounded, commanded me to admit and to peruse it. It contains heavy charges against certain individuals in this immediate neighbourhood, and craves of his royal highness, as he regards truth and justice, and the sacred cause of morality and religion, particularly in high and influential quarters, to institute an inquiry into them; the writer giving his name, stating that he is in a cottage not far from the lodge gate, and that he is prepared to be in attendance, and to prove the truth of his allegations. Your own name, Mr. Anneslie, is implicated, and courtesy forbade that any proceeding should take place in a more public manner until I had first communicated with yourself."

His lordship paused, and I thanked him.

"I know," he continued, "that you are acquainted with Ellen Darnley; and"—musing for a moment, he added, "I doubt not, since you have so interested yourself for her, that she is a person of a virtuous character."

"The most unexceptionable," was my short reply.

"Then, I understand—pardon me, Mr. Anneslie—that any investigation which may be made into certain accusations, brought by an individual pledging himself to prove the truth of them, will not be disagreeable to yourself? The Prince Regent has been pleased to commit the case to me, to enter into or dismiss as I may judge best. I like to meet charges at once when they affect myself, and so to have done with

them; and I am disposed to act by others in the same way."

"I quite agree with you, my lord, in this feeling."

"It is only what I expected from you, Mr. Anneslie."

There was a pause.

"You are acquainted with Mr. Waldy, of Beechwood?" his lordship presently resumed.

"I have known him all my life."

"This almost precludes the question I was about to ask, Mr. Anneslie."

"I beg you to speak without reserve, my lord."

"Of course, then, Mr. Anneslie, he is not a man of immoral habits?"

"He is a somewhat eccentric man, my lord, but a very good and religious one."

"Then he is one most grossly slandered," replied his lordship, with an indignant warmth, "and the base calumniator, who no doubt expected that his communication would be disregarded, and yet his slander inflict a wound, shall be exposed as he deserves."

"I wonder not that you should be surprised, Mr. Anneslie, as I see by your looks you are, at the purport of the questions I have ventured to ask you," continued his lordship; "but it highly concerns the honour of all parties, whether those whose characters are assailed, or those who have interested themselves in favour of Ellen Darnley, and indeed is due to his royal highness the Prince Regent himself, who has reversed the sentence of one of his judges—that the accusations which have been made should be investigated, and the integrity of the accused be made clear. Be assured I will be as frank towards you as you have kindly been towards me, of which, indeed, I may offer this very interview in proof. At present, I must content myself with thanking you for the

friendly manner in which you have received this interruption, and with expressing a hope that we may soon become better acquainted. Will you allow me to accompany you to the house?"

We then talked on different subjects, and I parted from him at the hall door, quite won, although he was Fanny's suitor, by his courteous and gentlemanly manners.

Having led my horse to the stable, I repaired to my own room to change my dress, and had just completed my toilet when the gong sounded for luncheon, and I hastened to be in my place.

"Mr. Anneslie," said his royal highness, on my entering the room, "we doubt not you have duly performed your mission?"

I replied that Mr. Waldy and Ellen Darnley would be in attendance at two o'clock, in obedience to his royal highness's commands.

When we were all seated at the luncheon-table, I observed that there was still a vacant chair, which I concluded to be intended for Mr. Waldy. Nor was I mistaken, for a minute afterwards a servant announced that Mr. Waldy and a lady had arrived, and were waiting in the anteroom. Lady Clydesdale gave orders that Mr. Waldy should be admitted; and that the lady should be shown into the library.

As Mr. Waldy had led a perfectly secluded life for so many years, I rather nervously watched the door for his entrance. But I might have spared myself all anxiety on the subject, for nothing could have been more dignified; and at the same time more respectful, than his demeanour. He looked pale and out of health, but his features had lost none of their intelligence. He was exceedingly well dressed, and his fine figure appeared to the best advan-

tage. Lord Clydesdale rising up from the table, advanced to meet him, and taking his arm, presented him to the prince.

His royal highness was evidently struck with his appearance, and in a gracious manner offered his hand, which Mr. Waldy, already kneeling, reverently raised to his lips. At the command of the prince, he then rose, and bowing to Lady Clydesdale, took the vacant chair. He had decidedly made a favourable impression upon all present, and every word which was addressed to him was with marked respect. The conversation presently took a very animated turn, the prince familiarly bearing a part in it, and his easy affable manner removing the constraint almost inseparable from the presence of royalty. Mr. Waldy had in earlier life seen much of the world, and had become acquainted in London with many of the most distinguished characters of the day. His heart seemed to have opened at the kind reception he was experiencing, and his naturally warm and cheerful disposition to have been rekindled. Memory went back to past scenes and past times, and he had many an anecdote full of point, and interest, and animation, which he related in a manner very striking and appropriate, to the great entertainment of all, and of none more than of the prince. And when his royal highness asked him to take wine, I saw with much pleasure how gratified he was.

The luncheon had been prolonged far beyond its customary length, when the prince arose, and conducting Lady Clydesdale back into the drawing-room, requested that the fair heroine, who had damaged or endangered the peace of so many of his liege subjects, might be summoned to his presence.

She came. Her dress was the same which she had worn in court. Her head was uncovered, and her long dark hair

fell gracefully over her shoulders, whilst the excitement of the occasion gave additional colour to her cheeks and lustre to her eyes. She stood embarrassed for a moment, as the door closed behind her; the eyes of all in the room being turned towards her, with a mingled expression of surprise and admiration.

But Lady Clydesdale was already on her way to meet her, and, speaking to her in the most encouraging manner, presented her to the prince. His royal highness, with a look full of the interest which he felt in her, extended his hand. The feelings of the moment and the recollections of the past crowding upon her mind together, overpowered even Ellen's self-possession, and falling down on her knees, she held the hand in both her own, and a tear dropped upon it.

The prince was moved, and, smiling, good-naturedly exclaimed, "We are besieged on our very throne without hope of resistance," at the same time assisting her to rise.

"We think there must be some mistake, or perhaps a surprise prepared for our entertainment," he added; "our pleasure was to have seen the young gipsy girl on whom we bestowed our royal pardon. Your name, my pretty maiden?"

"Ellen Darnley," she answered, modestly, but firmly.

"It must be all a falsehood," muttered Lord George to himself, but loud enough for me to hear, as I was standing next to him.

"Mr. Waldy," said the prince, observing the anxious looks with which he was regarding Ellen, "it is past our comprehension how your fair and amiable pupil should have needed our prerogative of mercy; that she shall henceforth receive such favour as she shall be found to merit, shall be our especial concern."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HIS royal highness having retired to his own apartments, and Mr. Waldy and Ellen having taken leave, I repaired to the library. Having seated myself in an easy chair, I was musing on what Lord George had told me about there being injurious charges against Mr. Waldy, Ellen, and myself, and was mentally referring them all to the same individual who had endeavoured to extort money by his threatening letter to the former, when a servant entered, saying that Lord Clydesdale requested to see me in his private room.

I found his lordship and Lord George sitting at a table, with several open letters before them.

"Herbert," said Lord Clydesdale, "we must install you as one of our privy counsellors; so be so good as to take your chair at our board of green cloth, and give us your advice.

"But first we must place before you the subject of our consultation, on which Lord George has already told you something. We are so perfectly persuaded of the utter falsehood of all the charges, that under other circumstances we should simply treat them with the contempt they deserve. But as his royal highness has been graciously pleased to grant the petition which I asked of him in behalf of Ellen Darnley, it becomes me both to satisfy his royal highness that the prerogative of mercy has not interposed for an unworthy object, and also to vindicate the character of an amiable girl, to whose rescue from an unmerited fate I have been so happy as to have been instrumental. It is due also to yourself, Herbert, and no less so to Mr. Waldy, to

enable you both to confute the calumny, which might otherwise be represented to have received confirmation, from having been so highly and boldly reported, and no vindication having been attempted.

"The first of these precious documents which I will read to you, is a note to Lady Clydesdale, purporting to be from Ellen Darnley, delivered to my porter at the East Lodge this morning, by a little boy, who said there was no answer."

Lord Clydesdale then read the note as follows :—

"MOST HONOURED LADY,

"Let your young friend beware how she give her affections to Mr. Herbert Anneslie. She never can have his; and she would not be his first victim. Certain misery awaits her, unless you and she take this warning in time, and the dove be delivered from the snare of the fowler.

"ELLEN DARNLEY."

"That is not Ellen Darnley's writing, my lord," I immediately said, on the note being put into my hand. "I happen to have one of hers in my pocket, which I beg both of your lordships to read. The note your lordship has just read assumes that she does not conceal her name, and therefore of course she would not disguise her writing; but the character of the writing is as unlike as possible."

"Your observations are perfectly just," said Lord George. "I have already mentioned to you, Mr. Anneslie," resumed the latter, "that other communications have been made reflecting on the same parties to whom Lord Clydesdale has referred. I think that I had better read first the following letter :—

"The writer, whose name is subscribed, actuated solely by the purest motives, the desire to discountenance vice,

and to bring the sinner back into the path of virtue, humbly craves of your royal highness graciously to give ear to the brief statement which he here makes, and which he pledges himself to substantiate face to face with the guilty parties. Wickedness stalks about unabashed in high places, and those who are in the highest should regard it. Ellen Darnley, who has just experienced such a signal instance of the royal clemency, is the frailest, as she is the fairest, of her sex. She first began a course of infamy in a gipsies' camp, where her paramour was Thomas Cooper, she being then only fifteen years of age. Since that time she has had many lovers, although, with incredible artifice and duplicity, contriving to evade general suspicion, and to maintain in the neighbourhood an unblemished reputation. The principal sharer in her favours at present is a young gentleman, well known to my Lord Clydesdale—Mr. Herbert Anneslie. The writer encloses copies of two notes, which his love of truth and justice found means to obtain from the little girl who was the messenger between the parties.

“It is with yet greater pain and reluctance, because the offender is of more advanced age, and in a more conspicuous position—that the writer charges Mr. Waldy, of Beechwood, with the grossest immorality, the particulars of which he will not here detail, but will fully set forth, if permitted personally to do so, in the presence of your royal highness and your court, of my Lord Clydesdale, and of Mr. Waldy himself.

“Humbly soliciting the honour of throwing himself at the feet of your royal highness, and earnestly praying that opportunity may be graciously given him of proving the accusations he has thus openly but sorrowfully alleged, the writer ventures to intimate that he shall be all day in waiting

at Mrs. Parker's cottage, near the lodge gate of Atherstone Park, and subscribes his name, with the most devoted deference and submission,

“Your Royal Highness's,

“Most humble and most loyal,

“Subject and servant,

“CHARLES SANDERSON.”

“The notes alluded to in the letter I have just read,” continued Lord George, “purport to be from Ellen Darnley to Mr. Herbert Anneslie, and from Mr. Herbert Anneslie in reply, both without date. The first is in the following words:—

“DEAREST HERBERT,—Come to me at dusk in the grotto. Mrs. Edwards drinks tea with a friend half a mile off; I will pretend a headache, which will excuse me from accompanying her, and when she is gone, will slip out to meet you.

“E. D.”

“To which,” said his lordship, in continuance, “this professes to be the answer:—

“MY DEAREST ELLEN,—Doubt not I will be with you at the place and time you mention, until which moment the hours will pass heavy and wearisome.

“H. A.”

“Most gross and impudent forgeries!” I exclaimed, “I should be glad to have this base accuser present, and for Ellen Darnley and myself to confront him to his face.”

“Perhaps it may be as well to send a messenger to Mrs. Parker's cottage, to say that we are ready to see this Charles Sanderson, and to hear what he has to say?” said Lord Clydesdale; “but I am satisfied he has never been there.”

A servant was accordingly despatched, and presently returned with the intelligence that no such person as Mr. Charles Sanderson, or any other gentleman whatever, either was, or had been, at Mrs. Parker's cottage on this day.

The house-porter, who had received the packet addressed to his royal highness being brought in, and desired to describe the appearance of the person who had delivered it to him, said that he was rather a tall thin gentleman, with a red pimpled face, and large reddish whiskers.

"Have you no suspicion who this can be, Mr. Anneslie?" said Lord George. "Is there no one who owes you an ill turn, or who bears an enmity against yourself and this young girl, and has taken this mode of avenging himself?"

"The description, my lord," I replied, "answers to that of a Mr. Jeffreys, a gentleman occasionally in this neighbourhood, of a very questionable character."

"Where is he likely to be met with?" asked Lord Clydesdale.

Inquiry being made of the servants, whether they had ever seen any one answering the above description, excepting on the occasion of his delivering the packet this morning, the huntsman said that he believed he had seen the same person looking out of a window at the Golden Cross, a public-house about two miles off on the Exeter road, as he was returning from exercising the hounds, between two and three hours ago.

"As I think I know the individual in question," I said, "perhaps I had better repair to the Golden Cross, and inquire if any such person be there; only that, being one of the parties accused, it might be as well to have a servant to accompany me."

"I will have the pleasure of riding with you myself, if you will allow me, Mr. Anneslie," said Lord George, smiling.

On arriving at the public house, we were told by the landlord that a gentleman exactly answering to our inquiries, who said his name was Johnstone, had been drinking brandy-and-water at his house that afternoon, until he refused to supply him with it any longer, and that he had set off about two hours ago on horseback, on the road to Exeter, in a state of intoxication.

Every one, of course, was perfectly satisfied that the accusations which had been made had not a particle of truth in them, and wondered what could be the object of the writer in such wanton and unprofitable villany.

The next day the Prince Regent and his suite left Atherstone, and I also returned to Beechwood, being anxious to pass all the time that I could at my own dear home before my departure for India.

In the course of the afternoon I walked over to Mr. Waldy's. I had not intended to mention to him the letters which had been received and read at Lord Clydesdale's, but he at once accosted me with the words,—

“Herbert, did you hear anything at Atherstone of some letters addressed to the Prince Regent, professing to be from a Charles Sanderson, and having reference, among others, to myself?”

Thus questioned, I related to him all that had passed.

“It is my old assailant, Johnstone, still at work,” said Mr. Waldy; “he sent me yesterday copies of the letters, with this from himself—read it.”

“MR. WALDY,—I have not heard of you yet at Crane Court, and write this to freshen your memory, and to quicken your movements. I also send for your perusal duplicates of some letters and notes which I delivered with my own hand at Atherstone, and with the contents of which I hope some

there have been made acquainted. If you comply with the proposal in my last, there is no harm done, because there was no one to confirm what was alleged, and so of course it is regarded as false. But if you do not immediately communicate with Mr. Subtle, and to the effect I have already stated, I will strike the blow which will consign you to infamy, and the sound of which shall be heard wherever your name is known. And then what I have elsewhere spoken shall help the work, for I will prove a worse tale than I have yet given suspicion of, and men shall not be at liberty to doubt. And they shall then believe what I have said of others, and you shall not fall alone. It is to show you what I have *the will* to do, that I send you the enclosed; and what I *will*, I *can*. *If I had not you in my power, I would not thus put myself in yours.* But you dare not show this letter. You dare not turn it against me. You are as powerless as the wild beast in the toils, who can only glare and roar at the hunter. *Five hundred pounds, and my lips are sealed for ever.* But five hundred pounds I will have from you, if not in this way, yet in another, and still you shall have no power to reach me; for you are not so blind as to pull down the house which is to crush you in its fall.

"The writer is neither *Johnstone*, nor *Sanderson*, nor *Jeffreys*, but one who owes you an amount of enmity which he will discharge in full, unless his terms be complied with; one, moreover, so wretched and so reckless, that it matters little to him whether he have the reward or the revenge."

"Poor man!" said Mr. Waldy, "he has placed himself out of the reach of my power to help him. For myself, Herbert, I must patiently await the event,—but I would that it were over!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

MR. WALDY's wish was not long in being accomplished.

Early in the morning of the following day, I received from him a note, requesting me to accompany him to Exeter, and to leave word at home that probably I might not return until the morrow.

On arriving at his cottage, I found a post-chaise at the door, and Mr. Waldy ready to start. We entered, and drove off.

Mr. Waldy then put into my hand the following letter, which he told me had been brought to his door at a late hour on the preceding night, by a man on horseback, who, having delivered it, instantly galloped off:—

“MR. WALDY,—I have committed a forgery upon you, have been detected, and am now in Exeter jail. I am to be further examined the day after to-morrow. As you regard your own reputation, or the life of a fellow-creature, come to me without an hour's—a moment's delay. Speak to no one—see no one first.

“GEORGE JOHNSTONE, *alias* JEFFREYS.”

Our old friend the governor immediately admitted us to see the prisoner, in whom I recognised, as I was prepared to do, the individual who had acted as Mr. Dastard's friend on an occasion with which the reader is acquainted. His countenance expressed at once guilt, impudence, and terror, with all else which vice and dissipation could stamp upon it. At first he refused to speak in my presence, but Mr. Waldy resolutely saying, “Now, sir, or never; Mr. Anneslie is

privity to all which has passed between us," he deliberately began, nearly in the following terms :—

" Well, sir, if you are willing to have a listener to what I am about to say, it matters little to me. I forged your acceptance yesterday of a bill for five hundred pounds, purporting to be drawn on you by Messrs. —, your solicitors here, payable on demand at Messrs. —, your bankers. Your signature was so accurately copied from the cheque you gave me, that it could not be questioned. A respectable friend of mine, personating a clerk of the former firm, received the amount, and I should have secured the prize, and not have failed to acquaint you with it, but at the very moment of his turning to leave the bank, who should come in (so the d—l ordered it) but one of the very parties supposed to have drawn the bill. The latter being put into his hand, the game was up; my honourable friend was secured, and of course gave my name, to save his own neck, though perhaps he may swing too. So off we were hauled to the magistrates, and committed for re-examination to-morrow. This, Mr. Waldy, is my case. Now I will state yours.

" Your conscience, Mr. Waldy—deny it not—is privy to a load of crime of no common enormity. Didst ever tell that lassie who made such a stir here the other day—that Ellen Darnley, as they call her—that she is thine own child, the child of shame, the living testimony to thy guilty doings, the offspring of seduction?"

" O remember not the sins and offences of my youth, but according to thy mercy think thou upon me, O Lord, for thy goodness."

My eyes were upon Mr. Waldy as he uttered these words; his own were directed upwards, and there was a meekness and humility in his look, voice, and manner, inexpressibly touching.

"I have a few more words to say to thee," continued the hardened man. "Did not the victim of thy lust expire in mortal sin, amid tears and groans—not the fruits of repentance, but of a mother's dying throes?"

"Have mercy upon me, O God, for I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me," groaned out Mr. Waldy again, in tones of the deepest penitence.

"Did she not die in giving birth to twins?" resumed his unfeeling accuser. "You are a holy man, forsooth, and dare not deny it."

"And merciful indeed was the Providence," exclaimed Mr. Waldy, "which took away one poor innocent from the evil to come! In all my daily prayers for seventeen years past, I have never omitted the most heartfelt thanks for this gracious dispensation."

"And you have stood by his grave, I suppose—the poor little innocent!—So have I"—replied the other, with a ghastly smile; and he made a pause again, as if to enjoy the tumult and agitation which he had caused.

"Now, Mr. Waldy," he resumed, "cancel the charge against me with your bankers and solicitors, and this tale goes not forth into the world. Declare to the magistrates to-morrow that the signature is your own;—or—you shall read the paragraph of your sin and your shame in every journal in the kingdom."

Mr. Waldy looked at him with an expression of mingled contempt and commiseration. "Unhappy man," he said, "guilt must have brought you low indeed, that you should hope for such villany in others. What I shall say to-morrow, I shall say before God; and, be the consequences what they may, I shall speak as if I knew that I should be summoned to answer for it the next moment on the peril of my soul."

"Then hear what I have yet to say, Mr. Waldy. I was reared in affluence and luxury, and to the expectancy of vast estates—and my reputed father died—and he left no will—and I took possession—and I lived as few *can* live—and I was courted and flattered—and none kept such a table, or such an equipage, or such an establishment as I did.—Are ye getting the clue to my story?—No?—Then I will give thee a little further help.—My heirship was questioned—and a legal bloodhound was set upon my traces—and I was hunted back to my cradle—and the false woman told what she had done, and my claims were sifted and found wanting—and—I was cast a beggar upon the world.

"As yet, however, I knew only so much of my parentage, as that there was sin and shame and secrecy about it. No inquiries could ascertain my birth; only I learned that I had once a sister, and that there was still a living benefactor in some way connected with the affair. So I came to this city, because I had heard that there was in the neighbourhood one who had eaten at my table, and had drunk of my wines, and had shared with me in nameless deeds. And I told him of my wretchedness, and craved of him some little help, and he made me his tool for a time, and then spurned me from him. I met with him, Mr. Waldy, in your own parish; and there he would have had me instrumental to a deed of darker dye than even I was prepared for, as the price of his mercenary favours. The young and the beautiful ought to be guarded, Mr. Waldy—better guarded than they sometimes are. Evenings are dusky, and walks are lonely, and the innocent are unsuspicious, and there are those abroad who care neither for God nor devil. And perhaps I should have consented, but that I suspected there was a tie between us, which I could not bring myself

to tear asunder. But one thing I thought that I had found here besides, Mr. Waldy, and that is, the link which had hitherto been wanting in my own fate. It seemed to me to exist in the mysterious connexion between Ellen Darnley and yourself, and in your own moody and melancholy character, brooding, as it were, over some secret sin. I became more and more convinced of it by comparing what I knew before with what I saw and heard now. I felt that I had you in my power, and that I might twist and turn you as I pleased. I have it all now from your own lips. And now, Mr. Waldy, you can save me. My crime is one which the law never pardons, and for which no prerogative of mercy ever intervenes. Alas! I am not fit to die; and when I entreat you to save my life, I entreat you for one who owes his miserable existence to yourself—whom you believed to be sleeping in an infant's grave—and who is the brother of Ellen Darnley."

The last words had scarcely been uttered, when Mr. Waldy, pressing his hand upon his heart, fell down in a convulsive fit. I was just in time to break his fall, and having untied his neckcloth, gave a knock at the door, which had been the concerted signal for the governor to enter. A turnkey was at hand, and the poor sufferer was borne away between us to an open window looking to the outer air, and Mr. Howard was sent for. Being too ill to be removed further, he was carried into a room in the governor's apartments, and put to bed.

In the mean time I despatched a messenger with a few lines to my father and Jane, begging them to break the intelligence to Ellen, and to bring her with them immediately. By express desire of Mr. Waldy, conveyed to me by scarcely more than a bare whisper, I sent also a note to

the chaplain of the jail, to say that it was the sick man's particular request to see him at an early hour the next morning.

We take advantage of the interval afforded us here, to enlighten the reader a little further in respect to the crisis at which we are just arrived; and to this end we must ask him to return with us for a few minutes to a period some twenty years back, and to the poor widow to whom the motherless infants of Ellen Anderson had been consigned.

The reader will remember that Ellen had been again committed to the care of the Darnleys. Shortly after this, the unhappy foster-mother, reduced to the greatest straits, took the resolution one day to leave her miserable home with the other infant, and to try how far she could do better for him and herself by appealing to the benevolence of the public—in other words, by turning mendicant, and begging from door to door. Not being versed, however, in the trade, she succeeded so ill, that having reached a distance of five-and-twenty or thirty miles—having been for nearly a week houseless, and almost shelterless—having on the preceding day obtained nothing but a piece of bread at a labourer's cottage—having missed the beaten track, and wandered about for many hours in the dark—she at length sat down, exhausted and almost fainting, among some trees.

Having fed the child with the last morsel of bread which she had remaining, and having hushed him off to sleep in her arms, she fell asleep herself. When she awoke, the day was just dawning, and she found that they were in the midst of laurels and evergreens, with a large house not fifty yards distant, evidently the abode of some wealthy occupant. All of a moment the thought struck her to lay the infant at the rich man's door. It was early in the month of April, and

she conceived it to be between five and six o'clock. Not a shutter had yet been removed from the windows, so that none of the inmates were stirring. She lost not a moment, but wrapping him up with the utmost care, and half denuding her own person to do so, she approached the house with trembling steps, concealing herself as well as she could among the trees and shrubs; and ascending the steps of the hall door, laid him down, still fast asleep, in a sheltered corner of the portico. She then hastily retreated, looked once back with an anxious and aching heart, and, with all the speed she could make, escaped into a neighbouring wood.

In the meantime the child slept peacefully on for about two hours, when the housemaid opening the front door to sweep the steps, was surprised to see lying in a heap, on the left hand, what seemed to her to be a large bundle of rags. Still greater was her astonishment, on rudely turning it over, to hear the feeble cry of an infant, and to see its emaciated features. She immediately hurried away with it to the housekeeper's room, who, being a humane and kind-hearted woman, ordered that it should be properly attended to, and borrowing some attire at a neighbouring cottage, dressed it out to the best advantage before presenting it to her mistress.

Mr. Johnstone, who owned the mansion, and who had just come into the neighbourhood, was a man of large landed property and immense wealth, of a generous disposition, and married to a most amiable woman; but they had no family. It is not my purpose to dwell unnecessarily on the success of the poor widow's expedient, or on the early history of the little outcast, thus suddenly transferred from the penury of a pauper's hovel to the abode of opulence and luxury.

Suffice it to say, that Mr. and Mrs. Johnstone, moved with compassion for the friendless infant, whose wretched appearance plainly indicated for what purpose it had been laid at their door, instantly determined to take charge of him, and placed him under the housekeeper's care. Having formed this resolution, they not only instituted no inquiry after the person who had left him, but enjoined upon all their domestics that the subject should never be made known out of the house, nor be talked about within it. It was a singularly Christian household, where no busybodies ever entered, and where all, feeling that attachment to their master and mistress, which both so well merited, regarded their just commands (and they were never otherwise than just) as an inviolable law which it was their duty and pleasure to obey. Surmises of course there were among neighbours on the introduction of an infant they had not seen before; some thought he might be a nephew, others an orphan child of deceased friends:—it was a very unaccountable neighbourhood, that there was no scandal about it!—the conjectures, however, receiving no notice, or encouragement, or contradiction from the family, the subject soon ceased to be spoken or thought of. As time advanced, some around paid the debt of nature, others removed elsewhere, until by degrees a new generation had sprung up, who had never heard a syllable about the matter.

The little foundling grew up a fine, handsome, intelligent boy, and soon gained the almost parental affections of his kind benefactors, whose name he bore, and whose heir he was universally considered to be. Unhappily they did not exert that control over him which they ought to have done; and under the united influence of the most injudicious indulgence, and of an innately bad disposition, he became

first a spoiled child, and then a wilful, headstrong, and vicious youth. At the university he was distinguished among all the dissipated spendthrifts of his time by his greater profligacy and more wasteful extravagance; and was engaged with his intimate friend, Mr. Dastard, in some atrocious acts of baseness and villany, in which, however, the latter had all the advantage which superior craft and more calculating meanness could give him.

Although much of all this was concealed from Mr. and Mrs. Johnstone, they had heard and seen enough to fill them with the greatest sorrow and alarm. From whatever cause, whether or not that he was kept in suspense, as to the disposition of his property, by a consideration of the disorderly habits and unworthy conduct of his adopted son—certain it is that Mr. Johnstone had not made his will, when he suddenly died; his wife having preceded him to the grave about six months before. The young man, to whom a suspicion of the true circumstances of his case had never been suggested, immediately entered upon, what he considered to be, his rightful inheritance, with all the exuberance of folly and extravagance, which might have been expected from an unprincipled profligate of twenty years of age. It was not long, however, before the heir-at-law, a distant relation, to whom the remotest hope of such a succession had never occurred, hearing that the old gentleman had died intestate, put in his claim, which he had little difficulty in substantiating. The activity and intelligence of his solicitor soon sifted out the circumstances of young Johnstone's introduction, and even traced him back to the cottage of the poor widow. The good woman not only confessed what she had done, but in the artlessness and simplicity of her gratitude, mentioned some particulars of an

unknown benefactor, whose bounty had for many years supplied all her wants. Being pressed too on the point, in consequence of a hint which one of her neighbours had unwittingly dropped, she acknowledged that *two* infants had in the first instance been given to her care, and that the other, a girl, had a few months afterwards been taken into other keeping, but where she was she could give no account. And that point being immaterial in respect to the matter which was being investigated, no trouble was taken to ascertain it.

We have only further to say, in order to elucidate the subject to the reader, that the woman on her return home, after having laid the infant at Mr. Johnstone's door, had two separate stories for the very few inquirers who ever troubled her with a question concerning him. To her neighbours she stated that she had returned him to his friends who had first sent him to her. To Jack Darnley she affirmed that he had died, and that his little grave was in the village churchyard. Whether the good man believed this, or whether he did not rather in his shrewdness, connect the disappearance of an infant at one place with the finding of one at another, (for in some way he had heard of this,) is a point not in our power to decide. At all events, he never appeared to question the truth of what had been told him, and related the same tale to the aunt at Exeter. His only care was, as we have seen, to prepare the way for Ellen's future safety under the protection of her own father.

The young prodigal, thus suddenly thrown down from the pinnacle of his greatness, and cast out a vagabond upon the earth, conceived the most inveterate and malignant hatred towards his unknown and unhappy parent, to whom, and not to his own vices, he imputed the ruin which had befallen him.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"I AM leaving you, my dear friend," said Mr. Waldy, feebly pressing my father's hand; "Ellen will then have lost her protector; I commit her to your care."

"I accept the solemn charge, my dear Waldy," was the reply; "she shall be to me as my own child, so let not another moment's anxiety on her account distress you. And now, if you have nothing further of immediate importance to say to me, I must not allow you to depart from Mr. Howard's injunctions of being perfectly quiet."

Poor Jane was looking so ill, and, in spite of all her efforts to appear composed and tranquil, was suffering so acutely from this new and sudden affliction, that my father saw it necessary to convey her back to the hotel, and to insist on her going to bed at an early hour.

I kept the night watches with Ellen. This extraordinary girl seemed always to rise superior to the occasion, whatever it might be, and never had I seen her to greater advantage than now. She was all that the most affectionate daughter and the most experienced nurse could be. She seemed to have an intuitive insight into the poor patient's wants, and to anticipate them all. There was no bustle or officiousness; all was care, thought, and consideration; but all was calm and collected.

The morning was beginning to dawn, when I prevailed on her to go to bed, on the promise that she should be immediately called, if any unfavourable change should take place.

"Herbert," said Mr. Waldy, in a faint voice, as I was sitting

at his bed-side, after Ellen had retired; "have you seen him since."

I well knew his meaning, and replied that I had not.

"Go to him, Herbert," he said; "go to him, and get him to pray, and pray with him, and pray for him."

"Do not excite yourself, my dear sir," I answered, greatly affected.

"I cannot but believe, now, Herbert," he continued, "that I was deceived as to the death of my child; that he spoke the truth, alas! that he is, indeed, the fruit, the evidence, the just avenger of my guilt, that so, by most righteous retribution, wherewithal I have sinned, by the same might I be punished. Go to him, then, Herbert; tell him that the greater sin is mine, yet that God has been most merciful to me, and has given me time and grace to repent. Tell him that my peace has been made with God, through Him whose blood cleanseth from all sin, and that the same only way to peace and pardon is still open to himself. Tell him, too, that his father, though great his guilt has been, is not the hardened hypocrite he supposes him to be, and that he is praying for him, and sends him his forgiveness and his blessing."

He sunk back exhausted on his pillow, and I endeavoured to comfort him, by saying, that I would not fail presently to do as he desired.

It was scarcely yet seven o'clock, when there was a gentle tap at the door, and Mrs. Thompson, having inquired most kindly how my poor friend was, told me that the Rev. Mr. Aston, the chaplain, was below in the parlour.

I thought Mr. Waddy had been dozing, but seeing him turn his head towards me with an inquiring look, I immediately mentioned to him that the clergyman was arrived, and

asked if I should go down and bring him up with me, to which he made signs of assent.

Having introduced Mr. Aston into the sick room, I retired.

"Reverend sir," said the sick man, holding out his hand, "I am obliged to you for coming to me. I must nurse the little strength I have for the work I have to do; for my time is short."

He paused, and seemed to be in deep meditation. Mr. Aston waited in respectful silence until he resumed.

"I have to request, reverend sir, that you would be good enough to administer to me the last offices of the church to her dying children. But I desire first, as a member of the church of England to reveal to you, a minister of that church, a load of guilt of my early life, which has ever since weighed me down to the ground, and rendered life itself an almost insupportable burden. The confession, perhaps, will be no unfit preparation for the receiving of my last communion."

He paused again, and pressed his hands together, and slightly lifted them up. His eyes were closed, but his lips moved. He was seeking and gathering strength. Mr. Aston silently regarded him with feelings of deep interest and respect, not unattended with awe;—there was one before him on the threshold of eternity.

Mr. Waldy then told him, in a few brief sentences, the outline of the sad tale of his sin and his sorrow; adding that Mr. Herbert Anneslie knew and would communicate to him the rest.

When the penitent had concluded, Mr. Aston in the gentlest and kindest manner took him by the hand, and said,

"And now, my dear sir, having committed your cause to God, can you be content to leave all in his most righteous and merciful hands, and attend without distraction of thought or

affections to commemorate His love unto death, through whom you have found reconciliation, and so receive this holy Sacrament to your great and endless comfort?"

"I trust that I can, through His grace," was the thoughtful and solemn reply.

From that moment I believe that the dying man was set free from every earthly care, excepting for his unhappy son, and that even this was not permitted to disturb his serenity.

"You would wish it to be to-day—what hour shall we appoint?" said Mr. Aston.

"Oh! yes, to-day, to-day," he replied, "I may not see to-morrow. Will you inquire for me if Herbert is within?"

As I was leaving Mr. Waldy's apartment, after having introduced the chaplain, the governor respectfully asked me to allow him a few minutes' conversation in his own room, and then gave me the horrifying intelligence that Mr. Johnstone—to call him by the name he had usually borne—had died in the course of the night by his own hands, having found means to strangle himself in his cell. An intimation was added that my presence would be indispensable at the inquest, but that the latter was not to be held until the evening, in consequence of some communication which Mr. Howard had already made to the coroner.

On my return, I found Ellen sitting by Mr. Waldy's bedside, her hand within his, and there was a peaceful and even happy expression in the countenance of the latter, such as I had never seen in it before.

"Herbert," he added, smiling, "I have arranged with Mr. Aston and Ellen for eleven o'clock this morning. I particularly desire the presence of your dear father on this occasion. I told him last night that he was not to come again until I sent for him: so you had better go, and bring him back with you, and Jane too."

But amid all the composure and serenity of feature and manner, there was a something besides in Mr. Waldy's look which filled me with apprehension. I was not at that time conversant with death, as I have since become, but I thought I saw it there. My worst fears were presently confirmed by Mr. Howard, who acquainted me that the patient was sinking fast, and that if there was anything of importance to be done while life and sense remained, it must be done without delay. I answered that I knew Mr. Waldy had executed his will, and that eleven o'clock had been appointed for his receiving the holy Communion. He expressed his satisfaction that we had not fixed a later hour, and kindly warning me that we must be prepared for a separation which was near at hand, he took his leave, promising to return again early in the afternoon.

The hour arrived, and we were all assembled in the sick man's room. What a solemn scene! Whilst Mr. Aston was making preparations for the service, my whole life seemed to pass in review before me with a rapidity and distinctness which astonished me. The past and the present appeared but as one. My childhood and my mother—Mr. Waldy as I first knew, and as I saw him now—the diamond ring and the camp of gipsies—Ellen's adventurous life, and the vicissitudes of my own—the hopes and anxieties of the last five months—all appeared the history of a moment. And then came the dim future—the departure of one friend close at hand—my own approaching separation from all I held dear—should I ever return?—what might be the intervening events?—who would be remaining to receive and to welcome me?

I was mourning how unreal everything was, when the voice of Mr. Aston awoke me up to *the realities of religion.*

* * * * *

I had been under the most painful apprehensions lest Mr. Waldy should ask me further about his unhappy son, and I be compelled to reveal to him the truth. But he was mercifully spared the knowledge of his dreadful end.

After the conclusion of the service, he lay almost motionless for a considerable time, exhausted by the deep emotions which had been excited within him. All the rest had retired; Ellen and I were sitting by his bed.

It was about two o'clock in the afternoon, when he became extremely restless, and made signs that he wished to be raised up. He sat for some time supported by pillows. Presently, fixing his eyes intently on Ellen, he motioned to her to sit down on the bed close beside him, and holding out his right hand to me, which I took and held in my own, he said in a feeble voice, but with a look full of anxious meaning, "Herbert, remember—go to him, Herbert." He was then silent for full a quarter of an hour. Gradually his full dark eye brightened up, and a placid smile spread over his pale but noble and intelligent countenance, as he said, directing a look upward, "Merciful indeed has He been to me, and praised be His name!" Shortly afterwards, turning towards me, and affectionately pressing my hand, he said, in a tone and manner peculiarly solemn and affecting, "When I am borne hence, let me be laid, Herbert—you know where—by the side of Ellen Anderson's grave." They were his last words. He leaned his head on Ellen's bosom—and the spirit passed so gently away, that we knew not the exact moment when he ceased to breathe.

Thus died Mr. Waldy—a man endowed by nature beyond almost any other I have ever known with qualities both of mind and person to win esteem and admiration. But grief and remorse clouded all the opening prospects of youth, in some

degree soured his naturally amiable temper, and gave that gloomy character to all he said or did, which has so often either offended my readers, or excited their compassion. He was regular and exemplary in all the external duties of religion; the ordinances of the church afforded him real comfort; and in the study of the holy Scriptures, in serious meditation, and in private devotion, he sought and found peace to his conscience; but any degree of earthly happiness or enjoyment he neither expected nor desired. In this, perhaps, he may be considered to have erred, but so it was. Not that he had anything about him of despair or despondency, he was too full of faith and hope to permit that; nor was he always quite in the same melancholy mood—at times he was even cheerful; but the sense of present reconciliation did not remove from him, as from some it might have done, the bitter remembrance of past guilt. He thought of one who was gone, and whom he had caused to sin, and he could derive no pleasure or gratification from anything which this world could afford.

Besides his house, and the little land attached to it, his personal property rather exceeded nine thousand pounds. With his frugal habits, it would have amounted to much more, had he been less generous and benevolent. His charities, unostentatious and little known, were on a very extensive scale. The poor of Beechwood had good reason to bless him. And many an indigent recipient of his bounty, at a greater distance, scarcely knew the source whence the stream flowed, until it was suddenly dried up.

Nor was he less judicious than he was liberal, in the alms which he bestowed, and the pecuniary assistance which he rendered. A well-timed loan from him was often more serviceable than a gift, relieving from a temporary burden,

without repressing exertion; and more than one honest, industrious man, oppressed by the hardness of the times, or struggling with difficulties from fortuitous and unavoidable circumstances, owed it to Mr. Waldy's seasonable help that he and his family were not hopelessly overwhelmed, but still held their heads erect with smiling countenances, and dared to look the world in the face.

He had many years since resigned his fellowship at Oxford.

To my father he had devised his books, a very valuable library—some few only excepted in which he had written Ellen's name. To Jane and myself he had left two hundred pounds each, and one hundred pounds each to the other three children. Everything else he bequeathed absolutely to Ellen, commending the poor of Beechwood to her care.

He lies where he desired to do, to the north of the chancel in — churchyard, by the side of the only other grave which is there. A stone cross of the plainest character marks the spot, bearing the simple inscription—

“WILLIAM WALDY,
Born January 13th, 1760;
Died March 7th, 1811.”

* * * * *

On the evening of the same day on which my poor friend died, I was obliged to attend the coroner's inquest; it having been postponed to that late hour on the representation of Mr. Howard, unknown to me, of the circumstances in which I was placed, and the certainty with which Mr. Waldy's decease might be expected in the course of the afternoon.

My evidence, of course, involved many points of Mr.

Waldy's history; and, indeed, he had expressed his desire to Mr. Aston, that nothing respecting him should be concealed, which it might concern either the cause of truth and justice, or a due regard to the interests of others, to be made known. It would have been impossible, from the publicity necessarily given to an investigation of this nature, to have kept from the knowledge of Ellen the secret of her birth, and the delicate task of imparting it to her was very properly intrusted to my father.

In respect to the unfortunate son, a verdict of temporary insanity was returned, and he was buried in the churchyard of the parish in which the jail is situated. His letters and papers revealed a mass of iniquity, in which Mr. Dastard figured very prominently, and stood convicted, in his own handwriting, of the basest and most flagitious transactions. The infamous proposal, to which the unhappy deceased had made allusion in the prison, was fully explained, but of which I say nothing further here, than that the amiable and virtuous girl, the casual sight of whom had inflamed his vile passions, was wholly unacquainted with his villanous designs, and had never spoken to him, and almost had never seen him, in her life. The true character of his intended son-in-law was soon represented to Mr. Cranstoun, and the daughter happily rescued from the misery which was awaiting her.

That I may at once draw the curtain upon all the villains who have acted parts more or less conspicuous in our drama, I may mention here that Henry Cooper, being under sentence of death some time after this for highway robbery, attended by circumstances of great violence and barbarity, confessed to the chaplain of the jail, that what he had stated on the trial to the prejudice of Ellen Darnley was

perfectly false; that she had never done or said anything which was unbecoming a virtuous and modest girl, during the time she was with them; and that the ring was in a manner forced upon her by Thomas Cooper, by the advice of their old mother, that they might turn it as evidence against herself, in case she should betray them, and that it was then settled among them that they should tell the tale as he had told it at the trial.

Thus it is, that whilst, by the just judgments and wise providence of God, "evil hunts the wicked person to overthrow him," through all the intricacies of his guilt; "the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart, and will save such as be of an humble spirit." And thus it is again, that whilst worldly prosperity introduces vice and its attendant sorrows into the abodes of rank and affluence, there often exists true nobility, a heart right with God, and peacefulness and contentedness of mind in the pauper's cottage, or in the gipsies' camp.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

On the day succeeding our return to Beechwood, I rode over to Atherstone Park, to call upon the kind friends there.

I was ushered into the library, where I found Miss De Vere alone.

"Mr. Anneslie," said that amiable kind-hearted girl, "I was hoping you would come here to-day. You have had a sad scene to pass through; but your friend is gone to his rest. And how is poor Ellen? I need not say that you have all had our sincerest sympathy."

This was said in so feeling a manner, that I needed not my

previous knowledge of her to be quite convinced of her sincerity; and I briefly told her so much of what had passed as I knew would be interesting to her to hear.

"We are now returned to our own quiet ways, Mr. Anneslie, which I am not sorry for; though I am sure the prince was most affable and agreeable whilst he was here, did you not think so? I believe he would have extended his visit to another day, had it not been for some despatches which he received, and which rendered it necessary for him to hold a privy council with as little delay as possible."

"What a very gentlemanly and agreeable person, too, Lord George is," I observed.

"Indeed he is," replied Miss De Vere, looking at me, and smiling; "I suppose you are aware, Mr. Anneslie, that he is a great admirer of a friend of ours, Fanny Cranstoun?"

I thought I had schooled myself to hear that name at least without betraying emotion, but I had over calculated my stoicism.

"Yes, Miss De Vere, I *am* aware of it, and I believe him to be every way worthy of her; and I hope, words cannot express how sincerely, that they may be happy in each other."

I stooped to stir the fire, for I did not wish my fair companion to notice the tear, which was starting unbidden to my eye.

"Then you do not know that she has declined the offer of his hand?" she replied.

"Declined his offer?" I exclaimed, turning hastily towards the speaker, "impossible! How came she to do so?"

"Dear Mr. Anneslie," returned the lively girl, with an affected air of surprise, "how can I pretend to divine the motives which induce a pretty young lady of seventeen to

reject a lover, and a title, and a large fortune, and a handsome and fascinating man into the bargain? Nevertheless, it is most true, for I have it in a letter from Miss Cranstoun. And papa and mamma, I believe, are not best pleased at it."

"And may I ask, Miss De Vere, when this took place?"

"Just before Lord George came down here; and I understand on the occasion of his going to congratulate poor Fanny on her providential rescue from a watery grave, through the chivalrous exertions of Mr. Herbert Anneslie."

"Then I honour him still more than I did before, Miss De Vere," I replied, "to be disappointed in his fondest hopes, to aspire to the hand of such a woman, and then to lose a prize which he must almost have thought his own; and yet still to have so much command over himself and his feelings as to be the agreeable, courteous, cheerful person we found him to be! He must be a person of very extraordinary merit."

Miss De Vere fixed her eyes upon me, as if to ascertain how far my looks corresponded with the sentiments I had expressed, and then said, with a marked earnestness and kindness of manner—

"Mr. Anneslie, you have rightly read the true character of that high-minded nobleman, as I believe only one as candid and honourable as himself could have done. But as he has been in this instance an unsuccessful suitor, the prize is still open to other competitors."

She relieved me from the embarrassment of any reply to this remark, by immediately adding, in a playful tone,

"You have not made a single inquiry for my uncle or aunt."

"But I have been on the point of doing so several times, my dear Miss De Vere. I know from the servant who

received me at the door, that Lord Clydesdale is from home; I hope Lady Clydesdale is well."

"My aunt complained of a headache, and is gone out in the carriage to try to drive it off. I excused myself from accompanying her, having several letters to write; and moreover, I wished not to miss the pleasure of seeing Mr. Anneslie, if he should call."

"How very kind in you, Miss De Vere!"

"You intend to remain with us to-day, of course?"

"I am very sorry that I cannot; but Mr. Waldy was my father's oldest friend, and I know that his loss is greatly felt by him; and Jane, too, has to mourn over one for whom she has ever entertained the sincerest esteem; so that duty and affection alike call me to Beechwood, where indeed I feel that I ought to be at this moment. So I must wish you a good morning, and request you to offer my best compliments to Lord and Lady Clydesdale."

We then shook hands, and bade each other adieu with the undisguised and unaffected cordiality of mutual regard and regret.

"But I must not forget to give you a note from Miss Cranstoun, which she enclosed in one to myself; it arrived only this morning. And *à propos*, you have heard, of course, that they are all coming down to the Lodge to-morrow?"

"I had not, indeed," I replied; "we returned home only late last night. The tidings quite surprise me."

"But you may depend on their being correct, for Miss Cranstoun wishes me to go to them. They are going abroad for some time, and are to be off within a fortnight, and so it was necessary to come down to Beechwood first. They remain, however, only a couple of days. Perhaps Miss

Cranstoun will tell you something about it. Here is her letter; and now, Mr. Anneslie, once more adieu."

I was crossing the hall, when Lord Clydesdale rode up to the door, and shaking me kindly by the hand, said,—

"I am glad to see you, Herbert; but why in such a hurry to be off?"

Having told him that I had promised to return home to dinner, he desired me to give him a few minutes in his own room, whither I followed him.

"I have heard some of the particulars of the late distressing affair which called you again to Exeter," said his lordship; "and I allude to the subject, only to assure you that that amiable girl shall not want a friend, either in Lady Clydesdale or myself. We all feel much interested in her comfort and welfare, and shall promote them as far as we can. Lady Clydesdale and Caroline will drive over to see her very shortly.

"And now," he continued, abruptly changing the subject, observing, perhaps, how much I was affected by his kind consideration of poor Ellen, "we must have a few words about India. You are to sail on the 10th of next month, and should lose no time in preparing your outfit. I must be permitted to give you your sword, which I know I need not remind you is never to be drawn but in the cause of your country, and then to be wielded bravely." Saying which, he put into my hand a Bank of England note for a hundred pounds, and bade me a good morning. I returned the grasp which he gave me; I could not speak.

My readers will readily credit me that, as soon as I came to a fittingly retired spot, I reined up my steed, broke the seal of Miss Cranstoun's note, and devoured its contents. They were as follows:—

"MY DEAR MR. ANNESLIE,

"From that moment of inexpressible anguish, when, as you rushed past me in the hall of Elmsgrove Lodge, I besought you to save Fanny, and felt that, under God, her life was in your hands—from that moment I was bound to you for ever. Had you failed in your perilous and noble attempt, I should still have felt that I owed you obligations which I could never discharge. But you saved her—you counted your own life as nothing, and you saved one a thousand times dearer to me than my own existence, and without whom, if she had thus miserably perished, I could never have known one moment's happiness more.

"And now, Mr. Anneslie, what am I to say? I can scarcely tell why I am writing. I know that you love Fanny—oh! Mr. Anneslie, pardon me for daring to say such a word; and what would dear Fanny say? She would never forgive me. But she ought to have a feeling for me, for you saved her, saved her when she was sinking in the deep waters—saved her when none else could have done so. Fanny, I do not care for your anger. Mr. Anneslie, she has a good affectionate heart; she knows it all, she knows that she owes her life to you, and she has more than feelings of gratitude. Oh! that my dear father and mother were not so blinded! that they could see that something else goes to make up happiness, and is necessary to happiness, besides titles and riches! But I am an undutiful daughter, and Fanny is a dutiful one and never would have written, and never will do—no, never will do what is contrary to duty.

"Dear Mr. Anneslie, I dare not read what I have written. I am a weak-minded foolish girl, always doing something which I ought not. Perhaps it is so now, but I feel that

my heart, in this instance at least, is not in fault, though I dare say my poor head is. Make allowance for me, dear Mr. Anneslie; be kindly considerate of what I have written; and favourably, in your candour and friendship, judge one, who owes you a deep debt which she can never pay.

“EMMA CRANSTOUN.

“Berkeley Square, March 12, 1811.”

I shall not attempt to describe my emotions during the conversation with Caroline De Vere, or whilst reading the generous effusions of Miss Cranstoun's grateful and affectionate heart. I shall only say that I considered circumstances now to be essentially changed, and myself, in consequence, to be in a totally different position from that in which I appeared to be before. I was no longer an obstacle in the way between Fanny Cranstoun and the wealth, rank, and far higher merits of Lord George. That point was decided. I was quite sure that, after the refusal given, neither would the one again sue, nor the other be prevailed on to accept. Fanny and I had been imprudent, but neither of us had been guilty of anything dishonourable or undutiful. Neither had I sought, nor she permitted, aught that was secret or clandestine. What I was to her when alone, I was to her in public. I had paid her the homage of my heart, and she had tacitly received it. But no presents, no pledge, nothing directly or indirectly to constitute an engagement, had passed between us. She was as free and unfettered as before we had ever met. We had, therefore, nothing for which to excuse ourselves to any one, nothing to recall or to recant.

I immediately took my resolution. I determined on an interview with Mr. Cranstoun.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

I APPROACHED the door of Mr. Cranstoun's house,—that house which had once been my own happy home, and where, too, I had but lately passed so many delightful hours—I approached it now with that sickening sensation which the heart feels, when we are conscious that our fate and our happiness are in the hands of another, from whom we do not expect the boon, and from whom, therefore, it seems to us that it would be even galling to receive it.

On requesting to see his master upon particular business, I was shown by the footman into the breakfast-room. No one was there. And whilst awaiting the pleasure of Mr. Cranstoun to see me, I will just give my readers a hasty sketch of his general character, but one rather more defined than they have yet had.

He was a man of a somewhat haughty disposition, but not without kindness of heart. The latter, however, had been much chilled and obscured by the education which it had been his misfortune to have received, and the principles which he had early imbibed. He had been taught to regard every transaction as a matter of barter; so that the first consideration, ere he disposed of anything, or acceded to any proposal made to him, or became a party to any movement suggested by others, (for he was never known to have originated one,) was, "What am I to gain by it?" Even in the closest and tenderest connexion which a man can form, Mr. Cranstoun was influenced by the same principle. He had been for some time thinking about the pretty daughter of an opulent city mercer, when his father

advised him to pay his addresses to Miss ——. It then became a question between the *high family* of the one, and the *fair face* and the *funded property* of the other. Having dispassionately considered the point, he inclined to think the old gentleman's advice good; proposed, and was accepted. Being thus in the habit of looking upon everything in a business-like form, and every transaction in a pecuniary point of view (or if not money, it must be money's worth), he addressed himself to the subject, whatever it might be, as coldly and systematically as if it were the price of consols upon the stock exchange.

The servant re-entering said, that his master requested to see me in his private room.

I accosted Mr. Cranstoun as much as I could in the manner I used to do, and offered him my hand.

I cannot say that I was very cordially received, but my hand was not refused, and desiring me take a chair, he said, in a cold constrained manner—

"I think you said that you had some business with me, Mr. Anneslie, if I understood my servant correctly; may I ask the purport of it?"

"To obtain your permission, Mr. Cranstoun, to my aspiring to the hand of your youngest daughter."

He appeared rather surprised at my coming so immediately to the point, and looking me steadily in the face, asked,

"And pray, Mr. Anneslie, what advantage do you propose to my daughter or to myself by it?"

"Your daughter, Mr. Cranstoun," I replied, "would have a heart and a hand devoted to her service, and yourself a son-in-law of a birth and family not unworthy your alliance."

"I suppose, Mr. Anneslie, yours is not the only devoted heart and hand my daughter might expect, nor yourself the only son-in-law I might hope for of a birth and family equal to your own."

"Undoubtedly not, sir; but permit me to say, that my words were simply in answer to your question. I repeat my request."

"I do not see, Mr. Anneslie, what advantage it would be either to my daughter or myself. Nor, to be plain with you, sir, do I think that we are much indebted to you either for your present proposal, or for your past conduct towards my daughter or ourselves."

"I do not understand you, Mr. Cranstoun," I replied.

"My daughter's hand, sir, has been solicited by a nobleman, not more distinguished by his high rank and large fortune than by his many excellent qualities, and every other recommendation which could make us ambitious of the connexion he was so desirous to form. We owe no thanks to any one who has thrown an obstacle in the way. I am sorry, sir, that you affect not to understand me."

"*Affect*, sir? Allow me to ask you, Mr. Cranstoun, what I have ever done to merit such an imputation?"

"Have you not clandestinely dealt with my daughter, Mr. Anneslie? and do you not now come to me to sanction addresses which you have already paid, and which you could not have failed to be fully aware must have my entire disapprobation? How else am I to account for her refusal of the hand proffered to her, but by supposing that you have surreptitiously pre-engaged her affections?"

"I am sure, sir," I rejoined, "that you cannot yourself be aware of the nature of the language you are using, or of the very injurious charges which it implies. I have paid no

addresses, Mr. Cranstoun, beyond what you have yourself been witness to. I love your daughter, and I have paid her, almost unconsciously, those attentions which the feeling dictated. But I have never spoken to her of love. If she has declined the hand which you desired her to accept, she has acted in the perfect freedom of her own unfettered will. And I must tell you, sir, with all the respect due to the father of Miss Fanny Cranstoun, that you have spoken most unadvisedly in charging me with clandestine conduct."

As Mr. Cranstoun made no reply, I continued,—“And now, sir, I ask with increased confidence permission to address your daughter. You conceive that I have her affections, and if so, you have the power to make us happy.”

He gave me a mingled look of incredulity and surprise, as if doubting whether he had heard me correctly—whether I were sane—or what my meaning could be.

“I mean, Mr. Cranstoun, that Providence has amply endowed you with that pecuniary ability to do good and diffuse happiness, of which, no doubt for the wisest and best of purposes, it has deprived me.”

“This argument, Mr. Anneslie, which youth, and inexperience, and self-interest suggest, is not one by which you can seriously expect me to be influenced.”

“Is it wholly selfishness on my part, Mr. Cranstoun, if, as you conceive to be the case, your daughter’s happiness is no less dependent than my own on the resolution to which you shall now come?”

“In reference to my daughter’s happiness, Mr. Anneslie, I confess I have little apprehension on that point. I have no doubt that absence will soon cure the love-sick girl, and that then she will see this silly affair in its true light. You are now about to proceed to India, where I wish you every

success. You have my sincere hope that you may prosper and distinguish yourself. But you must promise me that you will not entertain another thought of an union with my daughter."

"And by what right, sir, do you require this of me? Miss Fanny Cranstoun, as I have said, is free. Her honour is a full security against anything of a clandestine character, if mine is not; and I too deeply regard her happiness to inflict on her the pain of a parting interview, were I even willing to subject myself to the sorrows of it. But beyond this, Mr. Cranstoun, you have no claim upon me; and beyond this I owe you, and promise you, nothing. I am going, sir, as you observe, to a foreign and distant land. What vicissitudes may be awaiting me there, I cannot tell—what trials or what perils. But go where I may, or whatever events may befall me, I shall ever have before my eyes the image of your lovely daughter to stimulate me in the path of duty,—if there be hardships and privations, to cheer me under them,—if there be dangers, to inspire me with courage to brave and to surmount them. Whether, or under what circumstances, she and I may meet again, there is One only who knows. May we submit ourselves implicitly to his keeping, guidance, and disposal! and whether it be for life or for death, or whatever may be his will respecting us, may we rest satisfied that it has been all ordered by Him, and that He has ordered it for the best!"

So saying, I arose, and, slightly bowing, relieved Mr. Cranstoun of my presence.

Under feelings not to be described I wandered towards my home. As I approached the cottage, my emotions became stronger and almost insupportable. "No, I cannot enter, I dare not see any one," I said to myself, and abruptly

turned my steps, and walked back towards the lodge. Fanny was to accompany her father and mother on their return to London that very afternoon, so that even the poor comfort of feeling that we were not far distant from each other would soon be denied me, and I determined in the meantime not to lose sight of the house in which she was. Suddenly I was seized with an irresistible desire, if possible, to see her once more. To effect this, I went and concealed myself under a tree close by the side of the bridge, over which the travelling carriage of Mr. Cranstoun must necessarily pass. A misling rain soon began to fall, and the whole appearance of the sky and meadows around me seemed to sympathize with my own thoughts. The droppings presently fell through the branches, and the water ran in little snake-like rivulets down the bark of the old time-worn trunk. My clothes soon became saturated, yet I did not move. I was as it were spell-bound to the spot, keeping my eyes ever on the bend of the road where the carriage would first make its appearance. At length I heard the sound of wheels in the distance—four post horses at a rapid rate turned the corner—and the equipage I had been so anxiously expecting approached the place where I was standing.

But every window was drawn up, and the drops of rain were chasing each other so thickly down the panes, that I could not discover a feature or a figure as the carriage swept by me. The next moment another turn in the road snatched it from my view; and sitting down upon the projecting roots of the old tree, I wept like a child.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

It was a calm and quiet evening. The sun had set about an hour. The moon was riding high and bright in the heavens. The rippling waves danced and glistened beneath her cold silvery beams, undisturbed by the gentle breeze which swept so lightly over their surface. A few white clouds were chasing each other along the vaulted sky, scarce dimming the light of the fair luminary above as they flitted across her disc. The pilot was at the helm. The sailors were plying their several occupations, with a monotonous jargon none else could understand. No other sound broke upon the ear save the fretting of the vessel as she slowly wore on her way. The few passengers still on deck were sitting with folded arms, or mournfully pacing to and fro, with thoughts too busy and hearts too sad for speech. I was standing where I could be most alone, straining my eyes to catch one last glimpse of the white cliffs of dear England, and impatiently brushing away the water which obscured their view. But even the faintest outline had now sunk beneath the horizon—and I, too, went below.

No apartment on the element I was now traversing could have exceeded my cabin in comfort. I had been too much absorbed in thought to notice it before, but it was not the one I had selected. It was more roomy and better furnished. There must have been some mistake. I was hanging up my little lamp over the table, when I saw a letter. It was Ellen's handwriting. I cannot express the feelings of that moment. The first written communication from one on land—from one of the beloved friends we have left behind—

forces upon the mind the reality of the separation, the increasing space which is growing between us, more vividly and acutely than all the waste of waters we have passed through. Dear Ellen! one heart at least is true as the needle to the pole.

It was some moments before I was composed enough to break the seal, and to read as follows:—

“MY DEAR MR. ANNESLIE,

“But for your friendship and generous exertions I should now have been where you will be when this reaches you, on the fathomless and pathless wilderness of the ocean, though not under your honourable circumstances. You have a long and wearisome voyage before you, and I desire, in affection and gratitude, to assist in making it as agreeable as I may. I hope you have the largest cabin in the ship, and that it is provided with everything which can in any way tend to your comfort. The thought of thus doing something for you, and of your receiving pleasure from it, as being done by a friend—some such pleasure as I have felt in the doing of it—has helped to relieve to me the pain of separation from one whom I love as a brother, and have long looked up to as my protector.

“I seem to have lived a whole life within the last few weeks, and to have learned in them the wisdom of years. I have seen how all is under the immediate direction of Him whose eye never slumbers, and whose power and mercy are alike boundless. To Him I cried in my trouble, and He delivered me out of my distress. And now, Lord, whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee. There is nothing I desire so much as to be a faithful steward of the abundant means which God has put into my hands, and to have His

grace, every day that I live, to love Him more, and to serve him better.

"I scarcely give an anxious thought to your welfare. I believe you have ever been one of the people of God, and then why need I fear? He will guide you through the perils of the deep, though the waters thereof rage and swell; amid the din and the danger of battle He will spread his shield over you; and when the haven is reached, and the conflict is ended, you will enter into His rest.

"And now, dear Mr. Anneslie, farewell! We shall not meet again in this world, but what of that? We shall soon meet again in that better land, where brothers and sisters never part; where, with those who have been dear to us—in the amiable and eloquent prelate's beautiful language—'we shall dwell for ever, one fold under one Shepherd, a fold into which no enemy enters, and from which no friend departs.' Farewell!

"ELLEN DARNLEY."

* * * * *

I landed at Calcutta on the 24th of September, 1811, and immediately proceeded to join my regiment, encamped amid the mountains of Nepaul. Lord Clydesdale's letters of introduction made me at once known in several influential quarters, and procured me the first vacancy which occurred on the staff of the commander-in-chief.

I had not long left England, when the entire exculpation of Ellen, by the confession of Henry Cooper, her accuser, (to which I have already made allusion in a former chapter,) placed her perfect innocence of all the charges against her on the most indisputable basis. The fact having been officially represented to the Prince Regent by the proper authorities,

and again by the Earl of Clydesdale, as a happy instance of the interposition of the royal prerogative in behalf of an innocent person, his royal highness was graciously pleased to command Lord George, on the occasion of his next visit to Atherstone, to call upon Ellen Darnley with the expression of his royal highness's condolence in the sufferings to which she had been so unjustly subjected, and his desire to know in what manner he might most acceptably evince to her the tokens of his royal favour.

"My lord," replied Ellen, "the prince's goodness and condescension, so obligingly communicated by your lordship, overpower me with feelings of gratitude which I am unable to express. My lord, may I be permitted to reply with one of olden time, 'I dwell among mine own people.' But, my lord; if I might so far presume," she hesitated for a moment, "there is one now fighting in India the battles of his country, to whom I owe it that my name was ever known to his royal highness, and I would humbly solicit that Mr. Herbert Anneslie might be spoken for to the captain of the host."

"Madam," said Lord George, taking her hand, and respectfully raising it to his lips, "your request shall be complied with."

"That beautiful girl," observed his lordship to Lady Clydesdale, on his return to Atherstone, "received me with as much ease and elegance as if she had lived all her life at the court of St. James's."

"The person of all others whom the little community of Beechwood could least spare," said my father, in one of his letters to me, "is Ellen. Gifted by nature with intellectual powers of the highest order, no less than with every personal attraction which captivates in woman, she has also a courage which is never daunted, and a self-possession which never fails

her. True, she has but a limited sphere for the exercise of such qualities, but even here occasions are continually happening which afford some scope for the influence of a powerful mind. The school, the sick-room, misunderstandings between neighbours, and even more serious disturbances in a country village, are all, more or less, under its control. Whilst she is herself so strictly subordinate to those who are set in spiritual or temporal authority over her, so free from all officious interference, so simply full of love for those about her, and seeking their welfare, that she excites no jealousy, and rarely meets with an opponent."

"If ever I want the matured judgment and sound practical advice of one of my own sex," writes my sister, "I go over to dear Ellen's cottage, and tell her all my case; and I never fail to return not only with a lighter heart, but, or it is my own fault, a wiser and a better woman than I went to her."

But it was plain to me to perceive, both from my own knowledge of her character and disposition, and from all which was communicated to me from time to time respecting her, that the discovery of her parentage under circumstances so melancholy and appalling—added to the many other trials she had so recently undergone—had made a deep impression upon her mind never to be effaced. It seemed as if the whole current of her thoughts had been changed. And from the date of her recovery from a severe and dangerous illness, which she had shortly after my departure for India, I am persuaded that the things of this life were little in her estimation. To all solicitations to change her name and her condition—and these were not a few from persons of birth and distinguished merit—her reply invariably was that she had a great work to do, and but little time in which to do it, and that she must not

allow other ties and anxieties to distract her thoughts and her affections from it. Her hand is still her own—her heart set upon higher things.

My promotion was most rapid, I had not been long attached to the General's staff, when I received a commission as lieutenant in a regiment of light dragoons in his majesty's service, then serving in India. Within two years after I was in command of a troop. In about another two years, a majority being for purchase, I received a friendly communication from the colonel commanding the regiment, stating that the amount had been paid in my name, and that he had accordingly the pleasure of now addressing me as Major Anneslie. I had scarcely been eight years in India, when I was promoted to the rank of lieutenant-colonel. In the war with the Nepaulese, and in the subsequent harassing campaigns which ensued throughout a series of years, I had opportunities of distinguishing myself, and I may say that I acquired the favourable opinion of my brother officers, and of those under whose command I acted. But the real source of my preferment was, as the reader will have already conjectured, the favour of the Prince Regent through Ellen's generous solicitation. His royal highness acquitted himself in a truly princely manner of his voluntary engagement to her to grant whatever request she might prefer. Every step which I obtained was, in one way or another, his royal gift. And on occasion of the last, he was graciously pleased to express to me, through Lord George —, his satisfaction that I had not disappointed the expectations which, from the interest I seemed to have acquired with the Earl of Clydesdale, he had been early led to form of me.

CHAPTER XL.

I WAS sitting one evening in my tent, enjoying the cooling breeze which had succeeded to a hot and sultry day, when I was informed that a young officer, just arrived to join the regiment, wished to deliver to me in person a packet of letters from England—the surest passport in India to an Englishman's heart. He entered—and Arthur Stanley stood before me. Though grown up from the child to the man since we last met, I knew him in an instant. There was the same nobleness of feature and of bearing in its fuller development. There was such an open, manly look, a step so free, a manner so self-possessed, and withal a demeanour so modest and unassuming, as must have fixed the attention and won the regard even of a stranger. Upon me it had a magic effect, and seemed to bring all the past before me within a moment of time, and all the friends who were dear to me within the compass of my tent. No one can wholly comprehend my feeling or my language who has not long been a sojourner in a strange and distant land. I welcomed him as I would have done my brother, and could with difficulty refrain from embracing him, so associated was he in my mind and my memory with scenes and objects far away. He, too, found and felt, from that first interview, that he had not left every friend behind him.

He brought me, indeed, a packet of letters from England. One was from Mr. Western, highly characteristic of the amiable, warm-hearted old man, expressing a hope that he should be spared again to see my dear mother's eldest son, with health unimpaired by climate, untravelled in heart and

affections, still an Englishman in everything; and concluding by commending his grandson to my kind consideration and countenance, and saying what a happiness it was to all his family that Arthur would find a friend in India, such as they were persuaded that I should be to him. My father, Jane, and Ellen added each their contributions to this epistolary treasure. All spoke of Arthur Stanley as an object of their most affectionate regard, (for since I had left home they had become intimately acquainted with him), and said they were sure that I should highly esteem him, both for their sakes and his own, Ellen told me that Arthur Stanley's commission had been presented to him, unsolicited, by the baronet who was high sheriff when she was standing at the bar—a man whose kindness was always practical in its character, and who had conceived a great affection for him from his conduct in court on that day. She added her full conviction, that the fact of his being attached to my regiment had been ordered by Him who orders all things wisely and mercifully, that so the noble-spirited and generous youth might not only meet with a kind friend, but with one who would give him, inexperienced and unsuspecting as he was, counsel, and guidance, and example.

Arthur Stanley was, of all the characters I have ever known, at once the most ardent, the most ingenuous, the most gentle, the most disinterested. He was, in all respects, an accomplished cavalier, and there was scarcely another in the regiment such a swordsman or horseman as he. In the eighteen months that we were together, I had frequent opportunities of observing his conduct in action, for we had many severe engagements with the enemy, and in all he was not more remarkable for his courage than his coolness. He had as much prudence and sagacity as he had valour and

daring; and, young as he was, he was the beau-ideal of a cavalry officer. He loved his profession, and he studied it, and none who are wanting in either of these qualifications can ever rise to eminence in it.

We lived together as brothers. The difference in age was not very great, and that of rank made no distinction between us in our private intercourse and intimacy. Our friends, our pursuits, our tastes, our inclinations were the same. The arrival of a mail from England—that happiest event in an exile's life—scarcely brought a letter to either of us which was not of almost equal interest to the other. And then, not only to *think* of friends, and to write to them, and to hear from them, but to *talk* and *converse* about them! None but an exile knows how to value the privilege.

Nor did this familiarity between a subaltern and his superior officer occasion the slightest offence to any. Arthur Stanley was universally a favourite. And actual service has at least this advantage, that the presence and the sense of danger bind men more together, and leave no room for the petty and paltry feelings of envy and jealousy. The angry, morose, and morbid passions have no room to work and to expand themselves, or find a legitimate vent in a more honourable rivalry against the common foe. When we were spoken of together, it was usually as "Colonel Anneslie and his youngest brother."

We knew that a battle might be expected on the following day, and we talked to a late hour of friends in England, and of the reward of toil and danger in the letters which we should receive from them in the course of the present week.

The next morning the enemy were seen to be so strong in force and in the position they had taken, that it was not

deemed advisable to attack them at once. A great part of the day, therefore, was passed in manœuvring, in hope of provoking the impatience of their undisciplined valour to engage on more equal terms on the open plain. This was at last effected, but we had no despicable foe to contend with, and their numbers made them truly formidable. Nothing, however, could eventually withstand the bravery and discipline of the British troops. We had been posted in the rear of the battle, to be ready to take advantage of any confusion in the enemy's ranks, and to complete their disorder. Late in the afternoon, it was thought that we might make a diversion favourable to the operations of the army in another part of the field, by attacking a powerful body of horse which had formed in great strength, menacing our left, the dislodgment of which would enable that part of the line to be brought up to the support of the centre and right wing, which were both engaged with far superior numbers; and the command was given to charge. It was obeyed by the whole regiment in admirable order, and the enemy were broken. They still fought, however, with desperate intrepidity wherever they could maintain their footing; and although the result of the day was now secure, many a brave fellow on our side was yet to meet a soldier's end. In the mêlée we were unavoidably separated from one another, or united only in detached parties of two or three. Such was the state of things when a pistol-ball struck my horse in the chest, and falling with him to the ground, my left shoulder was dislocated. As I was in the act of rising, I received a blow on the head from the butt-end of a pistol, which nearly stunned me, and some sharp weapon grazed the back of my neck. I was convinced that I had not many seconds to live, when I saw

Arthur Stanley fighting his way to my rescue—with matchless skill parrying and dealing blows—and two of those who had obstructed his progress lay prostrate on the field. He was performing prodigies of valour, and had already drawn off the attention of my assailants to himself, when his horse was shot under him, and another ball wounded him in the left thigh. The fall and the wound together rendered him for an instant incapable of defending himself, and his right arm was broken the next moment by the cut of a sabre. The enemy about us now rallied, and one of them was just preparing to make a deadly lunge at me with a sword, which I should have had no strength to ward off, having but an instant before been wounded in the right wrist—when the gallant Stanley, then close at my side, seeing what was passing, and disabled from aiding me in any other way, threw himself between me and my opponent, and received in his own body the thrust which must otherwise have proved fatal to myself. It was now my turn, and I placed myself over my fallen friend, so as to shield him as far as I could. But vain would have been all the aid or defence I could have afforded him, and we should have slept our last sleep side by side on the gory plain, had not some of our troopers come up at the instant, and putting the enemy to flight, succeeded in carrying us off the field.

It was past the dead hour of the night, when, escaping from the surgeon's hands, I hastened back to the rude couch where poor Stanley lay. As I approached he received me with a faint smile, and made an effort to conceal his sufferings. A death-like paleness had spread itself over his beautiful countenance, surely one of the most noble and intelligent ever cast in human mould. His left hand was brushing away the dark auburn hair which was clustering

on his forehead, as if the action gave some relief to bodily pain, or the air, thus more freely admitted, brought a momentary refreshment with it. His right arm lay powerless by his side. Convulsive motions, and the anguish of the wan and sharpened features, spoke the conflict which was going on within; whilst the growing dimness of the bright blue eye, and the quick heavings of the panting bosom, too plainly showed which way the conflict was to end.

"Colonel Anneslie," he said, as I was sitting beside him, and ever and anon wiping away the dewy damp of death from his brow,—“Colonel Anneslie, you will soon see my dear father and mother, and my other dear friends in England; tell them that I died full of love for them all, full of hope for myself, and perfectly happy.”

“I will tell them, Stanley, that a braver soldier never drew a sword, nor a more generous and gallant spirit ever passed away.”

“Tell them that I died a Christian soldier, and that I owe that blessedness to them.”

“I will, dear, dear Stanley, and that your last dauntless act was one of Christian love, and that you saved my poor life by the sacrifice of your own.”

“Then tell them, Colonel Anneslie, that I did but pay a debt I deeply owed, and that you have been to me a brother and a father, and the best and the dearest of friends.

“And, Colonel Anneslie,” he added, in a whisper, which I was fain to lean forward to hear, “when I am dead, cut off a lock of my hair, and give it with your own hands to”—a faint blush passed over his pale features—“Colonel Anneslie, you know to whom.”

The last words were scarcely articulate, and the eyes were

yet fixed upon me, beaming with all the affection of a young and feeling heart, when a sudden pang set the imprisoned spirit free, and they closed upon this world for ever.

I bent over the lifeless form of him I loved so well, and the tears fell copiously down; I had not wept before for many a year.

Alas! poor Stanley! He sleeps in an honoured grave, where those of his comrades laid him whom best he loved. The loud cannon and the muffled drums spoke the warrior's farewell—and brave men stood in silence around, and mourned him as few are mourned.

CHAPTER XLI.

I DWELL not on my irreparable loss. There is always a selfish character in overmuch sorrow for the departed; and there are always living objects who have a just claim to our powers and our sympathies.

My state of health, consequent on the events mentioned in the last chapter, not only incapacitated me from again taking the field, but rendered my return to England necessary, as soon as I should be sufficiently recovered of my wounds.

I was still in a state of great debility when I commenced my journey towards Calcutta. Although on my way back to my own dear home at Beechwood, my spirits were much depressed, and the loss of poor Stanley lay heavy at my heart. To an untravelled Englishman the mode of my conveyance and the circumstances of my route would have

appeared singular. Four sable natives were bearing me in my palkee on their shoulders. Four others were running by their side, to relieve them in turn. Another in front was carrying a torch. Our course was directly across the country, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left, sometimes over fields, sometimes through the intricacies of the forest. Midnight was approaching. It was altogether a strange and dreary scene. In every direction around me arose the cries, and the yells, and the barkings, and the deeper and more fearful notes, of the several inhabitants of this howling wilderness, prowling about, and hunting for their prey. But now the night wanes—the dawn is at hand—the sun ariseth, and they get them away together, and lie them down in their dens.

And even so it is with the troubles and sorrows of this transitory life. The evening of our little day may be closing in early upon us amid clouds and storms, and an angry and lowering sky. We may be in the deepest gloom of the dark valley, where the shades gather the most ominous around. We may be surrounded on every side by cares and anxieties, oppressed by pain, and sickness, and disease. We may hear the threatening voices of still worse evils about us. Yet the darkest hour of the night does but precede the coming morn. Let us only endure with patience for a little while, and the Sun of Righteousness shall arise, and light us on our way. "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: and the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." It was this prospect which one had full in view before him, when he wrote words of solace

to the afflicted, and bade them not only not to sorrow themselves as those without hope, but also to comfort one another with the same consolatory truths.

On my arrival at Calcutta, I found several letters awaiting me at my agent's. One, more bulky than the others, was from my father's solicitor, communicating to me, at greater length than I suppose my father himself desired to do, another most unlooked-for change in the circumstances of our worldly prosperity. The commercial undertaking which had looked so well, but which, from fortuitous causes, had failed, involving my father, as the reader is aware, in the ruin of his bankers, had again come into favour in the money-market, where a large capital was soon raised to prosecute it anew, in conjunction with the former projectors. The old shares, of which a very large number had been made over to my father, in consideration of the debt which was owing to him, quickly rose to par, and were shortly after at a premium. Some staunch friends of the late firm, induced both by feelings of regard, and by the honourable conduct evinced by them in a remarkable degree in all the embarrassments they had fallen into, had advanced them considerable sums to redeem their credit, and to buy up shares, which at first came into the market at low prices. Everything attached to the concern now prospered. Twenty thousand pounds had already been repaid to my father, and security given for the remainder of the debt, including interest on the whole amount from the date of its commencement.

This was, of course, very gratifying intelligence, but I had now seen too much of life, and experienced too many of its vicissitudes, and was under too recent and heavy affliction, to feel the exuberance of gladness from it, which I might

have done ten years before. And as if to impress upon me yet further the wholesome lesson I had learned, and that both *thankfulness* and *humility* might still be the companions of my way, another letter filled me with the most poignant grief.

If I have prepared my readers in any degree to appreciate the character of my sister—the sensible, gentle, ladylike, unselfish Jane Annealie—they will be pleased to hear, not so much that she had been restored to former affluence, but that she had been made happy in a husband devoted to her, and that, as mistress of Beechwood Lodge, she had had full scope given her for the exercise of the generous sympathies of her nature. So far had her amiable and excellent qualities won the good opinion of Mr. and Mrs. Cranstoun, seconded as these were by the undisguised affection of Emma and Fanny for her, that, after some little show of disappointment and hesitation, they had acceded with a good grace to their son Henry's most ardent wishes, and not only had given their full consent to his union with my sister, but had made over Beechwood to them for a residence, with an income little short of the annual value of its estates.

But a letter from my father now communicated to me the sad tidings of her dangerous state. She had never recovered the birth of her third child, nearly two years of age, and her health had so materially declined within the last three months, that the greatest apprehensions were entertained for her, and she had been ordered by Mr. Howard to Torquay. It was feared, too, that Fanny Cranstoun would lose her sight. My father expressed an earnest wish that, if I could do so consistently with a sense of duty, I would immediately return home. He was sure that my own health must require it, and Jane was most anxious to see me once more, but that I must be prepared for whatever might be the will of Provi-

dence respecting her. Ellen was quite well—by turns a nurse to one sister, and an elder sister to the other.

I wrote my father word that I had already taken my passage by the first ship which was to sail for England; that I was much better than I feared my last letter might have led them to expect, and only wanted a sight of them all, and to find my dear sister recovered, and a little rest and quiet at Beechwood, to restore me to health.

I was now on the ocean again, the cold restless ocean, which, for ever rolling along its mighty waters, is careless and reckless who may pass to and fro, whether outward or homeward bound, whether leaving friends or returning to them, whether in joy or sadness of heart, whether civil or military, whether the merchant or the missionary, whether bearing the arms of carnal or spiritual warfare—the sabre and the bayonet and the deep-mouthed gun, or the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Boundless, resistless ocean! man never appears so little and insignificant as when traversing thy fathomless depths. When I stand upon the earth, there is solidity and stability, and I feel myself secure. I feel, too, that I have an interest in the things about me, that there is something in common with myself, something which I may call my own. I see other little diminutive creatures such as I am; I count up their puny dwellings; and I too have my cottage. I look upon mountains, and lakes, and rivers, and plains, and fields, and forests, and trees, and ears of corn, and blades of grass; there is a separate individuality in them all, I can detach each from other in my thoughts. I cast around my eyes here, and there, and everywhere, and there is not a view or a prospect, which some definite object of sight and sense does not terminate. But, mighty, majestic ocean, I am upon the

wide expanse of thy abyss of waters, and I can discern no limit to thee. The heights of the earth I may scale, but thy recesses I cannot descend into. I see nothing on thy broad bosom but this nutshell in which I am tossed, now on the crest of thy waves, now in thy valleys below, as if it had been a bubble blown for thy pastime, the plaything of thy sportive hours. I look to all the points of the compass, to the east, and the north, and the west, and the south, and on every side I see only a *vastness* and a *oneness*, the very type of infinity and eternity!

Such were some of my thoughts, as I used to stand upon the deck, and see for days and days together no other object, far as the eye could reach, than the heaving billows and the dark blue waves.

But I was pleasingly reminded at last that even to the ocean the prohibition had gone forth from the beginning—"Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." The white cliffs of dear England once more greeted my eyes, and gladdened my heart. I left the ship by the pilot boat, and landed at Plymouth; and losing not a moment, took my place by the first coach to within one stage of Beechwood. There I alighted. I had no fear of my arrival being prematurely conveyed there. The coachman was a stranger to me. I recognised not a face that I saw, and I was myself so changed in personal appearance that, excepting among those who had been more than common acquaintance, I believe that I might have sat and conversed secure from discovery. The greater part of my baggage was yet in the ship, and the little which I had brought with me bore only my initials. Under a strange mixture of conflicting anticipations, I entered a post chaise, directing the driver to proceed at an easy pace towards Beechwood, and to stop at the third milestone from it.

I had necessarily been under the greatest alarm for my beloved sister, ever since the receipt of my father's last letter on the eve of my departure from India. These apprehensions naturally became more intense and exciting, as the crisis either of their sad fulfilment, or their happy removal, approached. But I resolutely checked all melancholy forebodings, and endeavoured to reason down my fears. She had naturally a good constitution—was in the ablest medical hands—had been taken to a milder climate—had youth on her side—and could I trust nothing to higher grounds of hope? Yes. And then I should see her and embrace her again—and my dear father too, and my brothers, and little Charlotte—and Ellen, to whom I owed so much, whose image was interwoven with all which had happened to me from my childhood until now—Ellen, so fair and so beautiful, and whom I loved as a brother should do.—And another too, whose name, like poor Stanley, I sometimes almost feared to write or to pronounce—she too might be there, her health restored, her sight preserved, all that she was before—and something more than this. I was in Fairy land, and dreaming golden dreams, when the carriage stopped, and I found myself within three miles of Beechwood.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE trampling of horses and the rattling of carriage wheels were so little in unison with my present feelings, that I determined to alight, and to proceed the rest of my journey homeward on foot. From the point of the road

where we had drawn up, there was a footpath across the fields, leading by a much shorter cut to the church at the western extremity of the village, close to which I had to pass to reach my father's cottage. It was one of the prettiest of all the pretty walks in the neighbourhood of Beechwood, passing now through verdant meadows, now through rich corn-fields, separated one from another by broad hedgerows, full of beautiful trees. On the left of the path as you come from the village, sometimes parallel with it, sometimes making wide excursions, and anon approaching it again, runs a clear little limpid brook, rippling and bubbling to the main stream; and on the right, down in a romantic dell, is a small coppice where the wild flowers grow. It was my dear mother's favourite walk, and this her favourite spot. Thither, in the happy days of childhood, we used to accompany her, and wander and roam about, and gather our little nosegays, and run and give them to her; and there, when I was something more than a child, and childish thoughts and childish feelings had begun to be succeeded by those of manhood—there have I sat, and listened, and wept too, as she would sing to me, so simply and sweetly, one of my favourite songs—perhaps "The Thorn," or "The Yellow-haired Laddie," or "The Mischievous Bee." Along this pretty path, and into this pretty dell, was the last walk which I ever had with her; and on our return, I so well remember her resting herself on a rustic seat beneath a branching oak, commanding a partial view of the church, and the river, and the bridge, made purposely by my father for her—with Jane on one side and myself on the other, and each of us with one of her hands in our own—on the very day before I left my home for the first time to take up my abode in London.

I was not yet very strong, and had undergone some fatigue since I left the ship at an early hour this morning, but I resolved on the walk, thinking that I should then be able to collect my thoughts, and determine how I had better proceed in making my arrival known before presenting myself at the cottage. I therefore ordered the post-boy to drive on to the head of the green lane, about a quarter of a mile short of the turnpike gate, and there to wait, answering no idle questions which might be asked him, until he should see or hear from me again.

It was a beautiful evening towards the end of April, almost the same day of the month on which I had sailed for India, ten years ago. I was walking slowly, and had not proceeded far when I thought that I heard the tolling of a bell. I started, but not hearing the sound repeated, I said, half aloud, "How extraordinary is the force of imagination! it not only gives a direction and colouring to the train of thought, but sometimes even practises on the senses!" However, I had scarcely given utterance to the words, when I distinctly heard the sound again. This time there could be no mistake, and my heart sunk within me. "Dear Jane!" I exclaimed, in the bitterness of the moment, "am I come only in time for this!" But I instantly checked such unmanly weakness; "how many sons and daughters of mortality are there within the parish of Beechwood, and why at once conclude that you must be the mourner?" The suggestion appeared so just and reasonable, that it almost silenced my fears. However, I walked more quickly on, the bell continuing, at regular intervals, to send forth its single knell, indicating that it went not for one who was just departed, but for a tenant whom the grave was already open to receive, and whom friends, and neighbours, and

acquaintance were now preparing to attend to that last and lowly abode. It struck me to be a very unusual hour for a funeral, for it was growing dusk, and the ceremony must necessarily be by torchlight, a rare occurrence surely in a Protestant village of England. As I hastened on with such speed as I could make, I recognised every spot and circumstance once so familiar to me. The brook still murmured on. Presently I passed into the pretty dell, and through the corner of the coppice; and on mounting the gentle eminence beyond, the village of Beechwood appeared before me, and I saw all the well-known features of the landscape as though I had left them but yesterday. On my path was every stile and gate as it used to be; and there was still the rustic seat under the wide-spreading oak,—for it had been my mother's, and all which had once been hers was kept and cared for with a vestal's devotion.

I was now not far from the village, without having met one individual by the way, though I had seen several walking on before me, apparently in haste. On this side of the river were willow beds and clumps of black poplar, and beyond it the road, running through the principal street, was so skirted with plantations, where the space was not occupied by cottages and their gardens down to the water's edge, that, excepting at few and occasional openings, what was passing and repassing could not be seen from the path by which I was approaching. The bridge, however, which I have so often mentioned before, stood out distinctly to my view on the left, and I could distinguish the tree under which I had waited to see Mr. Cranstoun's travelling carriage pass, and at the foot of which I had sat down and wept those bitter tears. I had not on the present occasion to pass that way, but to cross the river lower down by a foot-bridge, with a hand-rail on either side for a protection. This done, I was

in a green lane about a hundred yards in length, between two hawthorn hedges, with just so much inclination towards the right as that the one extremity was not visible from the other. At that which was furthest from the river was a wicket gate opening upon the high road, with the main street of Beechwood to the right—the principal oridge to the left, about two hundred yards distant—and at nearly the same distance in front, though inclining rather to the left, was the very handsome village church, with its tall and elegant spire.

I was walking slowly, and looking around me with much circumspection, lest I should suddenly encounter some one whom just now I would wish to avoid, when, on reaching the wicket-gate before mentioned, I saw a funeral procession almost arrived at the south-eastern entrance of the church-yard, where the clergyman, with surplice on and book in hand, was standing to receive them. I saw at once that it was a sad occasion of no ordinary interest. The mournful train was moving down a rather retired road, which communicated with Beechwood Lodge and other parts of the parish lying in that direction away from the village. I could see that immediately following the corpse were four individuals with long mourning cloaks and hatbands. Next came persons ranged two and two, with hatbands only. After them succeeded a retinue not to be numbered, including apparently the whole population of Beechwood. The line (for all were marshalled with a great degree of regularity) seemed to be interminable, and was still winding along some time after the coffin and the mourners, and many of those who came next in succession, had entered the church; and it then occurred to me that this late hour had been so fixed that all might have the privilege to attend.

I had no longer any doubt for whom this general interest

had been excited, or who was the departed servant of the Lord, to share in whose obsequies I had so fortuitously arrived. But I had been prepared for it, and God's will be done.

Closely wrapping myself up in my dark military cloak, which served me for a mourner's garb, and muffling my face in my handkerchief, as I saw so many do, I mingled with the rear of the procession, and took my place within the church, in a position where I was least likely to attract notice, if any had notice to bestow; and whence, as it chanced, I could plainly distinguish the countenances of those most sorrowfully interested in this occasion, reflected by the lights which had been placed around the reading desk and the pulpit. There I saw my father, greyer than when I parted from him last, and perhaps a little less upright in figure; though this might be only the effect of the mourning cloak thrown over his shoulders. There, too, was poor Henry Cranstoun, and my two younger brothers. From them my eyes were almost involuntarily turned to the memorial window over the altar, partially lighted up by the candles which were burning there, and on again looking to the mourners' pew I observed that my father's thoughts and regards were in the same direction. The church was full from one end to the other, and not one apparently was there but had a black gown, or a black kerchief, or at the least a black ribbon on the bonnet, or a bit of crape upon the hat. The officiating minister was one whom I had never seen before, a person of interesting manner and appearance, and seemingly about forty years of age.

When the earthly remains had been consigned to their kindred dust, and the solemn service had been concluded, and the mourners had retired, and the crowd had dispersed, I walked up to the side of the grave, that I might cast one

look upon the coffin of her whom I had so loved all my life, and to see whom once more had been the most earnest of all my wishes, since the receipt of my father's letter which told me that she was so ill. I could not suppress my sighs or my tears. Meanwhile the sexton had come up unawares, with a lantern in his hand. "Sir," said he, respectfully, but with a meaning in his words which brought me to myself, and hastened me away from the scrutiny I thought him inclined to make of my features and person—"Sir, your looks and manner are not quite those of a stranger. You knew something, I think, of this young lady, and I am sure, if you did, you loved her; no one ever knew her but did that. They say that she was very earnest to live till the next ship came from the Indies. But I give you pain, sir. Be assured that she died the death of the righteous; and, as you seem to take an interest in her, and knew her, sir, I believe, and loved her, you will know how to take comfort from that thought. I could almost think, sir, that I have seen you before, but I can't recollect. And may be, sir, I ought not to have been so bold as to speak to you about it, or about her who is dead and gone; but out of the abundance of the heart, we are told, the mouth speaketh, and there is not a heart in the parish, or the neighbourhood far about, which is not full now, and some of them ready to break; and if yours is one of them, sir, (for the eyes of the weather-beaten and the careworn do not drop tears for trifles,) you must e'en be content to take their consolation,—that your loss is her gain; and that's as true as ever was put on a tombstone."

"Thank you, my friend," I returned; "I know the value of those words, and I will take them away with me, and they *shall* be my consolation."

Then bidding him good night, and adding half-a-crown to my thanks, I gathered my cloak about me again, and hastened by the shortest way to the spot where I had directed the postboy to await me. I could not present myself at such a moment to my father and his sorrowing household, and ordered the driver to return to the inn at which I had alighted from the coach, and where I determined to pass the night.

Before retiring to my bed-room, I wrote a note to my father, telling him that, although not recognised by any one, I had been at the funeral of my beloved sister—a mourner indeed! That to spare both him and myself, I had deferred our meeting until the morrow, and that I should be glad if he would kindly come to me in the carriage I had sent, that I might see and converse with him a little before showing myself, after so long an absence, and under so great an affliction, to the rest of my family.

CHAPTER XLIII.

“MY dear Herbert,” said my father, the next morning, as soon as he was sufficiently composed to speak, or I to hear, “I have tidings both good and bad, both cheering and sad, to impart to you. Dear Jane is fast recovering her health, but we have lost one second only to her in the affections of us all, and mourned by us accordingly. Ellen has left us; and it was her loved remains which you followed last evening to the grave.”

I was wholly unprepared for this. The shock of my dear

sister's supposed death had been expected, received, and endured, and my mind had regained its firmness and composure, though my heart was bleeding. But what I had just heard—that Ellen, whom I thought to be in perfect health, and whom I had hoped to greet with all the affection of the fondest brother before half the day was over—that Ellen, to whom I was bound by all the obligations which gratitude and long-tried friendship could lay upon me—that Ellen, so distinguished by every mental endowment and personal charm, whom but the moment before I had beheld in my imagination in all her loveliness, such as I had seen her in the woods, and in the court, and when I bade her last adieu—that she should be all the while sleeping in her coffin, and sealed up from my sight for ever in her narrow bed, and that I should never speak to her, never hear her voice again—that I should even have looked into her very grave, and not have known that she was there—all came upon me in such an instant of time, and under such a conflict of emotions, that I staggered to the sofa near which I chanced to be standing, and for some moments was unable to speak.

My father did not misunderstand me. And I soon collected my thoughts and my bewildered ideas, and poured forth my heart in thankfulness that Jane, dear Jane, was still spared to me, spared to us all, everything which a wife, a daughter, a sister, woman in all her relations, could be.

And then to see her, as I presently did, in the bloom of returning health, the same simple, dear, affectionate creature she ever was; to see her with her husband and her beautiful children; to see her what her dear mother once was, the mistress of Beechwood—and like her, too, beloved by all about her; a mother to the motherless, a nurse to the sad and the sick; the kind, discriminating, judicious friend of the needy and

the friendless; it was to me like the physician from Samaria pouring oil and wine into my wounds.

"And now, Herbert," she said, after we had been conversing together for some time on the topics most at heart to us both, "you shall walk with me to see the pretty cottage which dear Ellen has left you, and whilst we are sitting in her little room—not lamenting that she is no longer there, you know, my dear brother, but rejoicing in the sure and certain hope that she is now whence we would not recall her if we could—I will tell you all about her."

But nature did not thus yield to grace without a struggle; the latter, indeed, triumphed, but the former *would* tell her tale and be heard too, and she told it with sighs and sobs, and tears which would not be restrained. Poor Jane leaned her head upon her hand and wept bitterly; whilst I hastened into the open air to seek relief from the suffocating sensation which oppressed me, and which almost stopped my respiration.

True it was that this dear lamented girl had bequeathed to me her cottage and its appendages, with all else which she possessed, excepting only three hundred pounds to Mr. —, who had been her counsel; one hundred pounds to the poor of Beechwood, to be expended as her executor should think proper; and some legacies, almost confined to my own family. The little domain around the cottage had been enlarged by the addition of some few acres of pasture-land, the purchase of which Mr. Cranstoun had kindly waived in her favour.

Ellen had never been well since the death of Mrs. Edwards, about eight months ago. The aged invalid required incessant care and attention, through an illness of several weeks, and Ellen could seldom be prevailed on to quit her bedside by

day or by night; and when she did so, it was to come to my sister's sick room, or to supply her place to little Charlotte. A fever consequent upon all this watching and anxiety, although not of itself by any means of an alarming kind, yet coming on a debilitated frame and system, assumed rather a serious character, and occasioned Mr. Howard to impress upon his patient that the greatest care and caution were necessary. A cold caught shortly afterwards gave early indications of what might with too much reason be apprehended. Unhappily the season of the year, it being winter, was against her. Decided symptoms of consumption presently ensued, and the consequences were but too soon apparent.

During the last month of her sufferings, Jane was sufficiently recovered to be much in attendance upon her; and it was then that she fully learned to appreciate the excellences of her temper and character. Full of gentleness, and kindness, and affection to all around her—full of humility in herself—there was a cheerfulness in all she said and did, which pain and debility had no power to overcast, and which only shone forth the more conspicuously as her trials were drawing to their close. It was the victory of that faith which overcometh the world; it was the crowning act of a life of self-denial; it was the reward of that previous discipline of the soul, which enabled her now to “pass the gloomy vale of death, from fear and danger free,” and to lose sight of the light affliction in view of the glory to be revealed. The hectic cheek, the feverish hand, the wasted frame, which were to others the source of so many vain regrets, and so many anxious anticipations, and so much unavailing sorrow, were to herself but the putting off the infirmities of this mortal state, in order to be clothed with

immortality. A stranger to the feelings which influenced her, and to the language which she spoke, might have deemed her perhaps one not quite herself, who, having experienced some withering of the heart's affections, was still thinking of the bridal dress, and the bridal morn, and of him who was to take her to his home; for indeed she would speak of such things, of the bride adorning herself with her jewels, and of the white robes in which she should then be arrayed.

Such were the interesting particulars in the closing life of Ellen Darnley, (for we still call her by the name so long familiar to us,) to which I listened in silence as Jane and I walked together to the abode which had so lately been enlivened and enlightened by her presence—from which alas! only yesterday, she had been borne insensible to her grave.

My sister led me into the drawing-room where Ellen usually sat. It was sweetly furnished, and a bow had been thrown out, which opened with French windows to the lawn. All within and without spoke a highly cultivated taste, and there was *mind* in everything.

"Here we used to sit, Herbert," said my sister, "and often talk about you; and wonder whether we should ever see you again, and what effect a ten years' absence, and an Indian climate, and many a battle, and, we feared, many a hardship and many a wound, might have wrought upon you. And the gallant Arthur Stanley, too! we thought what a comfort you must be to each other, and what a happiness to have a true and tried friend in a strange land! You cannot think what a sorrow it was when your letter brought us the account of his death; but then, Herbert, it was such a beautiful letter, and such a noble death! And you told us that you were coming home, and that was a great comfort. It was soon after receiving that letter that

poor Mrs. Edwards was taken ill; and I suppose about the time of your setting sail for England, dear Ellen's health began to give us much alarm. Her great wish, Herbert—I believe her only earthly wish—was to see you once more; and she put off for some days the receiving the Holy Communion for the last time, in the hope of partaking of it with you. But it was otherwise ordered, and no doubt wisely and mercifully. We all—that is, my father, Henry, and myself, received it with her in this very room, on the day before she was released from her bondage. The sting of death was so taken away through Him who giveth the victory—the bitterness of the last parting was so modified, so chastened, so changed into a subject of thankfulness and rejoicing, that this was indeed to us what it was designed to be to all, a means of spiritual strength, and of comfort and consolation. Everything around us is exactly as it was when Ellen left it, to be carried up to her bed for the last time, though we had no idea that her departure was so near at hand. She passed a restless night, and suffered considerably just at the last; but it was not for long. At about eleven o'clock the next day, she turned her eyes towards me, faintly and sweetly smiled, and almost instantly expired.

“And now, dear Herbert,” said Jane, “let us return to the cottage. My father claims the privilege of being our host on this first day of your arrival, and to-morrow we are to have another meeting at the Lodge.”

CHAPTER XLIV.

LORD and Lady Clydesdale had removed from Atherstone Park to their house in town. Having written to his lordship to acquaint him with my arrival in England, I

received in reply a most kind letter of congratulation, with an intimation that the king, George the Fourth, as the Prince Regent had now become, was to hold a *levee* in the following week, which I ought by all means to attend; that I must come up and occupy my old quarters in Piccadilly; and that his lordship would himself present me to his Majesty.

I found my noble host and hostess quite well, and just what they ever were—kind, courteous, full of heart and sincerity. At court I experienced a very gracious reception; the king being pleased to express a hope, that my return to England would soon be productive of restoration to health, which he was sorry to learn had been impaired in the service of my country. I met, too, kindly invited to dine in Piccadilly on my account, my old friend Lord George —— and his elegant, lively, and most agreeable lady, with whom my readers have long since been made acquainted, the *cidevant* Miss De Vere. The pleasure of the meeting, I have reason to believe, was mutual and very sincere. And I was not surprised to hear that they were among the very leaders of *ton*, and that there were none more popular, as there were few half as amiable, at the court of St. James's.

We all appeared studiously to have avoided any mention of the Cranstouns, but as I was handing Lady George down stairs to her carriage,—a privilege kindly assigned me on this occasion by Lord Clydesdale—her ladyship said, “you will be sorry to hear that Mr. Cranstoun experienced a slight paralytic attack about a week since, but they have wished it to be kept as secret as possible.” Then looking at me, and smiling, she added in a whisper, and slightly hesitating, “Is your heart untravellered, Colonel Anneslie?”

We were now at the steps of the carriage door, and I could only press her hand, and answer, “Yes, indeed.”

I was neither in health nor spirits for the gaieties of London life, and had intended to return on the following day to the domestic endearments, the pure air, and the sweet scenery of Beechwood. The melancholy intelligence, however, which I had just received, determined me on first calling at Berkeley-square, to inquire how Mr. Cranstoun was.

On the servant opening the door to my tremulous knock, I expressed very sincerely my concern that his master was ill.

"He is much better, sir, than he was, and is sitting up in his own room," replied the man, very feelingly and respectfully.

"I used to know Mr. Cranstoun very well," I observed, "but I have been long absent from England, and am only just returned from a distant land; be so good as to give him this card, and to say that Colonel Anneslie is very sorry to hear of his illness."

Thinking, probably, from my earnestness, that I was no mere formal visitor, the servant replied, "Sir, if you will walk into the breakfast-room, I will take your card up stairs;" at the same time leading the way, without waiting for an answer. I had no alternative but to follow.

As I passed through the hall, I heard a voice in the drawing-room above, the tones of which thrilled through every nerve, singing a little plaintive air—strange coincidence!—which used to be a great favourite with me; and singing it as none but Fanny Cranstoun could do. My knees smote against each other, and I was glad to sit down.

The servant had accidentally left the door ajar, and not a minute had elapsed when I heard a sound resembling a subdued hysterical scream, and at the same moment the hasty closing of a door above, and footsteps hurrying to and fro. I think a quarter of an hour must have passed—it appeared to me a very long time—when the same footman returning,

said that his master wished to see me, and requested me to follow him.

On my entering the room where he was, I found the old gentleman alone, wrapped up in flannels, with an ample dressing-gown of rich brocaded silk thrown loosely over all. I thought I perceived that one of his eyes, and a corner of the mouth were slightly affected by his late seizure, and his speech was evidently so, being slow and hesitating, and not quite distinct. He feebly put forth his right hand from beneath the folds of his cumbrous clothing, and welcomed me in a really cordial manner, the more affecting from the change which had taken place in his health and disposition since I had last seen him, ten years ago.

"I am very much concerned, Mr. Cranstoun," I said, "to find you so much out of health."

"Thank you," he replied, with a look of much kindness; "I am better than I was. My physician tells me—that the attack is of a less serious nature—than was at first apprehended."

He paused to recover breath, slowly and brokenly as these few words had been spoken. But I saw that he was proceeding to say something more, and I did not interrupt him.

"Colonel Anneslie," he presently continued, "I am glad to see you again—though I should scarcely have known you, I think—if you had not been good enough—to send me your card. Ten years—and a foreign climate—and hard service—make strange alterations. Ten years have told—you see, Colonel Anneslie—on those who have remained at home—without the other aids—which they have had in your case."

He paused again, bending forward in his easy chair, an elbow resting upon each arm of it.

"But I hope, my dear sir," I said, "that the change in your case is neither a great, nor will be a lasting one, and that your friends will soon see you quite restored."

"Ten years make a great change, too, in other respects," replied the poor invalid, without appearing to have noticed what I had just said. "Thoughts and sentiments change too, Colonel Anneslie—we begin to see some things in a new light—as our eyes are almost closing upon everything. Colonel Anneslie, I rejoice that you have so distinguished yourself—and that you have earned the promotion which you have acquired. But you are come back—to a rich inheritance besides—and I must say no more. And, indeed, I have not just now strength to talk. Mrs. Cranstoun is in the next room, and will be happy to see you. Good bye, Colonel Anneslie," again feebly pressing my hand; "remember me kindly to your father,—and tell them all at the Lodge—that I shall come down to them in a few days—for a little change."

I was reciprocating Mr. Cranstoun's friendly farewell, when Mrs. Cranstoun appeared at the open door of an adjoining apartment, and I advanced to meet her. She held out her hand, and taking me with her into the other room, made me sit down by her upon a sofa.

"We have both had many trials and sorrows since we last parted, Colonel Anneslie," she said; "indeed, to us the whole period has been little else than one continued course of anxiety. Emma, as you know, had a most happy escape; but she felt all Mr. Dastard's base and scandalous conduct very keenly. And we were very near losing poor Fanny, and have been under the greatest apprehension for her sight; but I hope that is safe now. And then dear Jane was so very ill, and Henry was almost distracted. And now

has come this last affliction, which has been almost too much for us all. We kept it secret from those dear children at Beechwood on Jane's account, until we could tell them that all danger was past."

Mrs. Cranstoun then asked me about myself and my health; and observing that I looked as if I wanted rest and quiet, expressed a hope that my native air and the society of so many friends, who loved and valued me, would soon restore me to health and spirits. Nothing could exceed her friendly manner, and I believe that she was perfectly sincere. It is the province of affliction to bring down high minds and proud looks, and to soften and to open the heart, and to make us better to know ourselves, and to have a kindlier feeling for others.

With a voice which I tried to command, but which I am sure betrayed the emotions under which I spoke, I inquired for her daughters.

"I left them just now in my boudoir," she replied; "we will go and look for them; I am sure they will be very glad to see you."

Saying which, she arose, and I accompanied her.

"Colonel Anneslie, my dears," she said, as she showed me into the room, and then retired.

Only one was there. On a sofa, at the opposite side of the fire-place, sat Fanny Cranstoun, pale, and flushed, and pale again, but beautiful as ever. I saw that she had been weeping. As I approached, she held out her hand. Eagerly seizing it, and pressing it to my lips, and murmuring, "Fanny, dear Fanny," I sunk unconsciously on one knee. She covered her face with her handkerchief, and sobbed aloud.

CHAPTER XLV.

MY DEAR READER, several years have passed away since I penned the preceding sentence, as the birth of three sons and two daughters can attest. The fact is, that the romance of my little history is come to its close; and although the daily routine of my life is to myself very delightful, and my happiness as complete to the full as earthly happiness had need to be, yet is it of too domestic and unexciting a character to offer anything, I fear, to be of interest to you. As, however, I would not take my final leave of you discourteously, or so abruptly as I may seem to have done, nor think for a moment that you are more wanting in a kindly feeling towards me and mine than I should have for what concerns your weal and welfare, were I acquainted with your circumstances, I will add a few words to what I have told you before.

The dear, beautiful, accomplished Fanny Cranstoun is my wife. She is the same that she always was. There is the same unvarying sweetness of temper, the same playfulness of manner, the same consideration for others, the same forgetfulness of self. She is altogether lovely. Her sight, too,—at one time almost despaired of,—under the skilful treatment of the most distinguished oculist of the day, has been perfectly restored. Our favourite rides are to Atherstone Park and Elton Hill. The walks at Beechwood are as pretty, and we as fond of them as ever.

We live at what the villagers still call, "The dear young lady's cottage;" we have given it the name of "St. Ellen's," but we both mean the same thing—something which asso-

ciates itself with departed excellence, gives the spot its peculiar charm, and endears it to us all. My father talks of purchasing an estate for us, with a larger house, which he says will soon be wanted. But we desire it not, and would far rather live on at St. Ellen's, and add to it as occasion may require.

Over the mantel-piece, in what used to be, and still is, the favourite sitting-room, is the portrait of a beautiful girl, dressed in a black silk frock, with a gipsy hat, the very image of the original, done by a master hand. On the back, in her own handwriting, and now enclosed and protected in glass, are the words—"For Mr. Herbert Anneslie, with Ellen Darnley's love." No one knew of it until after her decease, when Jane found it carefully packed, and locked up in one of her wardrobe drawers.

And if you should call at St. Ellen's, and happen to see my beloved Fanny in the garden, particularly sedulous about some trees of moss-rose, which are trained against the south wall of the cottage, right and left of the bow window, and fronting the lawn; and should be curious to know if there be any special history belonging thereto;—I just tell you in confidence, that the said trees, which blossom so beautifully, are all the produce of one little plant which I gave to Ellen in a flower pot, a few days before I departed for India.

My dear father, with only a few more grey hairs than when I left him, in 1811, and as upright in figure as he was then—for it *was* themourning cloak which deceived me—is still living in the cottage endeared to him by so many recollections, and better suited than a larger house would be to the retired life which he now leads. He justly considers himself entitled to this indulgence of his inclinations, inasmuch as Beechwood Lodge and St. Ellen's are only other

homes to his children, where they may see quite as much of the world as for any rational purposes they need do; whilst they are not without society, and that some of the best which the country affords, at his own house.

My brother Alfred is studying hard, and I hope likely to distinguish himself at the bar. For my youngest brother I was enabled to procure a cadetship in the East India Company's Service, in the Bengal Presidency, and he is already a lieutenant. Charlotte is a very pretty, sweet-tempered girl, much admired by a younger brother of the gallant Stanley—a very promising youth, but *not* Arthur Stanley, as I often tell him. The foolish young people are engaged to each other, and want to marry, but I am of opinion that *twenty-three* and *twenty* is too early an age for so serious a matter. I told the boy so the other day, and he asked me how old I was when I first proposed for Fanny Cranstoun? So I could only give a short cough and look another way, whilst the rogue, perceiving that he had made a hit, laughed outright. And then comes Lotty, and takes hold of my arm, and drags me away to her flower-garden, and next to see some rare plants and new geraniums in her green-house, and seems so fond of me—no, not *seems*, for she *is* so—and has such a look of her dear mother when she smiles; so I suppose they must have their own way, as far as my prudence is concerned. Well! anything rather than a long engagement.

People sometimes say to my father, "I wonder, Mr. Anneslie, you don't do this, and I wonder you don't do that, now that you are a rich man again; I hope you are not going to be a miser." To which he seldom makes any reply, although he need not travel far to fetch one. The *first fruits*, as he termed it, of God's new bounty to him may be seen within the beautiful parish church, which, having become

greatly dilapidated through lapse of time, and been grossly disfigured by divers incongruities which ignorance and bad taste had accumulated, has been entirely reseated and restored by him at his sole expense, under the direction of an eminent architect; although Mr. Absolute the grocer, and Mr. Currie the carpenter, did not see the necessity of it, and Mrs. Toogood and her daughters preferred a large square pew. But faith, and temper, and prudence, and love, won their way through all which opposed itself—coldness, indifference, selfishness, pride. The good work is happily completed, amid very general approbation. And the painted window at the west end—Mary sitting at the feet of her Divine Teacher, and listening to his words—testifies how dear to the inhabitants of Beechwood is the memory of Ellen Darnley.

I must not omit to mention that one of our most frequent, as well as most welcome, guests, is Mr. Western. He says that when anything frets him in the great city of Exeter, he starts off for the sweet village of Beechwood; and that he holds us all forth *in terrorem* to his wife (for all his children are married): "Come, my dear, if you don't let me have fresher eggs of a morning, and sugar-candy in my coffee at night, I shall be away to St. Ellen's;"—whither, however, she generally accompanies him, in order to take a lesson in these domestic duties.

Perhaps I ought to have told you before this, that Emma is married to Mr. Leslie, the eldest son of Lord Lessington, and is as happy, I believe, as from her many amiable qualities, and especially her devoted affection for her sister, she deserves to be.

Should you ask me how a retired soldier passes his time, besides riding and walking, and sitting and reading, and gardening and weeding with his wife—I am thankful to say

that time never hangs heavy on my hands. I have considerable employment as a county magistrate—am a commissioner of taxes—rather an active trustee of turnpike roads—not unfrequently consulted on parochial matters by the worthy incumbent, sometimes even by the parish overseer—one year undertook the latter office myself, and am annually elected to that of churchwarden. Moreover, I have by no means wholly given up my intercourse with those classical worthies of Greece and Rome, with whom poor Mr. Waldy used to take such learned and able pains to make me acquainted. I am still very fond of shooting; and Henry Cranstoun, the best fellow alive, though not much of a shot, nor caring much for the sport, has given me the entire control of the manor and preserves of Beechwood. When my health permits, I hunt with Lord Clydesdale, and keep as near to his lordship as I can; but I am hardly equal to the severe day, and the stiff country, and the long ride to cover and home again, as I used to be.

When I can do nothing of all this, I have ample reason to meditate on the supreme goodness of Him, who has given me such a sweet nurse in dear Fanny, such a patient spirit as hers is, such a loving heart, such a gentle and skilful hand to administer to me in pain and sickness. And sometimes when I have closed my eyes, and she thinks that I am sleeping, I am trying to bring home to my heart how merciful and salutary such a chastening is—how good it is to be so remembered and cared for by One who afflicts us for our profit, or I should be only too happy here, and consequently too unwilling to depart.

THE END.

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